

Sex on the...
HANOU (R) — Sex...
Parties offer...
on rror'
Robotic bird...
hunters eliminate...
danger to plan...
itors...
animal...
World's oldest...
football on site...
Public reading...
Don Quixote...
ation

Cabinet requests amnesty for juveniles

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Cabinet on Saturday requested that His Majesty King Abdullah consider reducing the sentences of 43 juveniles currently serving their terms in rehabilitation centres by half. This request for a special amnesty is provided for under the Constitution.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تائمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية والرأي

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Russian envoy criticises NATO's proposed naval blockade of Yugoslavia

Thousands hold vigil in Belgrade for slain journalists

Agencies

RUSSIA'S BALKANS envoy, Viktor Chermomyrdin, criticised NATO plans on Saturday for a naval blockade of Yugoslavia as the alliance's air offensive entered its second month with a report of missile attacks near Pristina. "The blockade [idea] is bad. The strikes are bad. When people die, it's bad," Chermomyrdin told supporters at a meeting of his political party. "Our home is Russia. This is why Russia is undertaking efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully," the former prime minister was quoted by Russian news agencies as saying.

"The problem in Kosovo can neither be solved by bombing nor by a blockade," he added. Meeting in Washington for a summit, NATO leaders hailed Friday a EU decision to slap an oil embargo on Yugoslavia to tighten the screws on President Slobodan Milosevic whose forces have driven hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians from the

province of Kosovo.

Milosevic last month refused to sign the Rambouillet accord granting autonomy to Kosovo's Albanian majority, prompting NATO to carry out its repeated threats to bomb Yugoslavia for its refusal to solve the conflict peacefully.

Stepping up its campaign, the alliance said it would study plans for a possible naval blockade to enforce the embargo and to block deliveries of supplies that could help Milosevic's war machine.

The German navy is ready to take part in a naval blockade of Yugoslavia, Admiral Hans Frank said in Bonn while Romanian Foreign Minister Andrei Plesu said in Bucharest that his country will join in the oil embargo.

Russia earlier this month dispatched the spy ship "Liman" to the Adriatic to monitor the NATO campaign in the Balkans, which it has steadfastly opposed as Western meddling in a Yugoslav internal matter.

Moscow said it will continue to provide oil products to

Belgrade. As much as 80 per cent of Russian exports to Yugoslavia are said to be comprised of energy products.

NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia "threatens to destroy international security," Chermomyrdin said, according to the Interfax news agency.

The Russian envoy said he plans to brief NATO representatives on his peace mission to Belgrade last week that he claims yielded agreement on the deployment of an intervention force to end the conflict in Kosovo.

Chermomyrdin maintains that Belgrade agreed to a military presence but Yugoslav officials have denied it.

Suggesting that the Yugoslav military may be in turmoil, Western officials said Milosevic had placed several retired and fired top generals in his army under house arrest out of fear of a rebellion.

"We think he is getting more and more concerned," British Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman Alastair Campbell said of Milosevic's



Ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo reach out for food in Kukes on Saturday. The UNHCR is trying to convince refugees to move from the Kukes area and border zones towards southern Albania for safety reasons (AP photo)

support base in the military. "The sense we have of him is that he is getting more and more bunkered."

Alliance warplanes carried out a daytime raid on the region around the Kosovo capital Pristina, with 10 missiles being launched, the Yugoslav Tanjug news agency said.

The agency said that the airport at Pristina-Slatina, which

has been repeatedly bombed, was among the NATO targets.

Tanjug also said five children were killed on Saturday when they tried to open an unexploded bomb in a village south of Pristina.

It said six other children were injured, two of them seriously, in the explosion in the village of Doganovic, 44-kilometre south of Pristina.

The funerals of the boys, aged between three and 15, took place on Saturday afternoon, Tanjug said.

The agency quoted parents as saying the bodies were torn to pieces. The boys were believed to have been herding cattle at the time. Tanjug did not say where the device came from.

There was no way to confirm the report independently.

because Western reporters and other monitors have left or been expelled from Kosovo.

NATO launched a fierce blitz overnight against Serbia's third city, Nis, south of Belgrade, hitting several civilian buildings and wounding one person, Serbian sources said.

(Continued on page 3)

Fateh divided over date of state declaration

RAMALLAH (R) — President Yasser Arafat's Fateh faction, which controls the bulk of Palestinian decision-making bodies, is divided over whether to declare a state on May 4 when interim peace deals with Israel expire.

"Although many Fateh leaders back delaying a declaration of statehood, Arafat may still have a hard time convincing Fateh's younger members and hardliners, Palestinian officials said.

Fateh official Nabil Amr said Arafat's interest in postponing was politically motivated.

Rebuffing criticism that Arafat was backtracking, Amr said the Palestinian president wanted to study the "pros and cons" of a declaration.

"This is a very practical idea and it can't be considered backtracking from practising a national right," he told Reuters.

Arafat appears to have succumbed to international pressure to delay the declaration until after Israeli elections on May 17 so as not to influence the outcome. Many Fateh officials have proposed to delay a decision until after the poll.

Four hardline Fateh leaders on Saturday issued a joint statement with seven of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO's) 11 factions, urging the PLO to declare a state in May.

The Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine said it would boycott next week a meeting of the Palestinian Central Council (PCC) on whether to declare a state because Arafat intended to put off the proclamation.

(Continued on page 2)

NATO leaders hammer out new 'strategic concept' for future

WASHINGTON (AFP) — NATO leaders Saturday put the finishing touches on a reform blueprint aimed at equipping the alliance to respond better to crises such as the one now faced in Kosovo.

At a summit to mark the 50th anniversary of the alliance, the 19 NATO members were to adopt a new "strategic concept," a document updating their definition of the alliance's fundamental tasks for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union transformed Europe's security landscape.

The new mission statement makes it clear that NATO remains, above all, an organisation of collective defence founded on a binding commitment to resist

an attack on any of its members.

While recognising the reduced risk of this happening, the document leaves NATO's nuclear posture unchanged from the days of the Cold War.

Britain, France and the United States, the three Western nuclear powers, rejected proposals from Germany and Canada to adopt a "no-first-use" policy.

For the first time, however, the new strategic concept formally authorises the alliance to mount military operations in situations where there is not necessarily any direct threat to the security of its members.

The principle of NATO operating "out of area" has already been established in practice in Bosnia,

where the Alliance carried out air strikes to end the war, then sent in troops to enforce the Dayton peace accord.

At the insistence of the European allies, the new strategic concept limits the scope of such crisis management operations to the Euro-Atlantic area.

It also calls on allied countries to accelerate the adaptation of their military forces to ensure they have the logistical capacity to carry out peacekeeping or peace-enforcement tasks.

The last major obstacle to a deal on the new strategic concept was removed when France and the United States agreed on how it should express the relationship between NATO missions and the

United Nations.

French officials said the document would recognise that primary responsibility for peacekeeping remained with the U.N. The U.S. had been concerned that a reference too explicit to the authority of the U.N. could hamper NATO's capacity to act decisively.

A spokeswoman for the French president's office, Catherine Colonna, confirmed that Washington and Paris had reached agreement on the document redefining the alliance's core goals and role.

She said the two sides had reached a "satisfactory" formula to be submitted to NATO heads of state and government gathered in

Washington for the summit.

U.S. officials say the example of Kosovo, where NATO has mounted an air campaign without the approval of the U.N. Security Council, establishes the precedent. The French argue that Kosovo should be an exception, not the rule.

Final approval of the text was held up, however, by objections from Turkey over provisions that would allow European allies to use NATO assets for operations in which the United States remained uninvolved.

The new arrangements are essentially aimed at enabling the European Union (EU) to organise its own operations. As a non-EU member, Turkey was holding out

for guarantees that it would not be sidelined from the process.

A senior U.S. official said after the morning session that the formula was being reworded to accommodate Turkey's concerns and that he was confident the dispute would be ironed out in time to conclude a deal.

Kosovo was only briefly discussed during Saturday's three-hour talks, which focused on future defence needs and an agreement to continue expanding NATO, according to the official.

Each of the 19 leaders had their own favourite candidates for future members, which will be apparent in a "subtly nuanced way" in Sunday's final communiqué, the official said.

Russia backs Syria's demands on peace with Israel

Egypt wants to bolster defences amid 'dangerous' Israeli arms buildup

Agencies

RUSSIAN FOREIGN Minister Igor Ivanov on Saturday voiced support for Syria's demands that peace talks with Israel, broken since 1996, start from the point where they left off.

"Russia as a co-sponsor of the Arab-Israeli peace talks along with the U.S. supports the resumption of the negotiations on all tracks," Ivanov told reporters on arrival in Damascus at the end of a regional tour.

"It is impossible to achieve permanent peace in the Middle East without Syria. Negotiations should resume from the point where they left off," Ivanov said.

Syria said the previous Labour-led Israeli government agreed during the talks to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud Party beat the Labour Party in Israel's May 1996 elections, says talks should resume without conditions.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa praised the Russian minister's support for Damascus' viewpoint.

"I am fully satisfied with the Russian position that peace talks restart from the point

where they left off, and that negotiations should resume on all tracks," Sharaa said.

Ivanov, who later opened talks with Sharaa, is due to meet President Hafez Assad at the end of his tour which took him to Israel, the Palestinian areas and Egypt.

Asked whether President Assad had postponed his visit to Moscow, originally planned for April 12, because of Russia's failure to conclude an arms deal with Damascus, Ivanov said: "We in Russia highly respect President Assad. We are still ready to see him in Moscow at any time he wants. All decisions regarding bilateral ties are adopted mutually and there are no problems that hinder the development of these ties."

"We solve all issues within a friendly and cordial atmosphere," the Russian minister said.

Assad's visit was postponed only 24 hours before it took place. Russia said the delay was made at the Syrian request and that a new date would be fixed soon.

Earlier this month Russia strongly condemned U.S. sanctions imposed on three Russian companies for reportedly agreeing to sell anti-tank weapons to Syria, saying Moscow's cooperation with Damascus was for defensive purposes.



Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, left, and his Syrian counterpart Farouk Sharaa drink coffee in Damascus prior to the start of official talks (AP photo)

Earlier on Saturday, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa urged Egypt and its neighbours to bolster defences against an Israeli arms buildup.

Musa denounced as "unjustifiably extremely intense and dangerous."

Musa, speaking to reporters after Egyptian-Russian talks on military cooperation, did not mention Israel by name but was

clearly referring to it, as it is the only regional country Egypt has accused of being a nuclear threat.

"Egypt, like any other country, must bolster its defensive capability, all the more so because it is in a region like the Middle East where there exists nuclear cooperation... as well as an arms race by one single country," he said.

This situation "must lead all neighbouring countries to act to defend themselves against this arms buildup which is unjustifiably extremely intense and dangerous," Musa warned.

Musa was responding to a question from a Russian journalist about Egypt's intention to bolster its military defences, especially air defences, with Moscow.

Car bomb attack in east London, several injured

LONDON (AFP) — At least four people were injured in a suspected nail bomb attack Saturday in east London, exactly one week after a similar blast blamed on white racists.

The explosion, said by witnesses to have been a nail bomb inside a parked car, also caused severe damage to nearby buildings, the London Fire Brigade said.

It went off opposite a police station and during the popular street market in Brick Lane, an area of London which has a strong Bangladeshi community.

There were however conflicting accounts of the explosion. Police at the scene said that it appeared the device went off while it was being driven to the station by a man who was injured in the blast.

Superintendent David Finimore said: "We don't at the moment know where it was coming from but we do believe it was being taken to a police station."

"A man found a bag and was taking it to the police station in his car when there was an explosion," he added.

"He was slightly injured and at the moment we can't say where he found it or what he was reacting to, but he was in the car at the time."

However, eyewitnesses reported a man running towards a car and placing a sports bag in the boot moments before the explosion at about 6:00 p.m. (1700 GMT).

Witnesses said some of the injured suffered wounds caused by nails.

They said the car had been completely demolished, with parts of it strewn for dozens of metres around. One shop caught fire, and most had their windows blown out.

A spokesman for the Royal London Hospital at nearby Whitechapel, which is within walking distance of the scene of the blast, said four casualties with apparently minor injuries had been rushed there.

They were understood to have made their own way there.

Saturday's blast came exactly a week after a nail bomb exploded in a busy street market in Brixton, an ethnically mixed area of south London, injuring 39 people.

The Brixton bomb had been claimed by several right-wing extremist groups. Police say they are no closer to uncovering the perpetrators of the attack but they treating it as a white racist attack.

Earlier Saturday, police staged a reconstruction of

events leading up to the blast in a new appeal for information.

Police confirmed there had been an explosion at Brick Lane, but refused to give further details. The area was cordoned off.

Raja Miah, a local councillor, ran to the scene after hearing the blast.

"When I got there it looked like a scene from a war zone," he said. "I saw a car ablaze with pieces of shrapnel and debris all over the place. I saw several people with blood from glass injuries on their face."

He said he understood from police that around five people had been hurt in the incident.

Miah said people would be quick to assume it was a racist attack, similar to Brixton, and disclosed that a week ago, there had been a hoax claim that a bomb had been planted in the area.

Another resident, Dunstan Gunasingha, said there had been recent anonymous telephone warnings to local shops and traders that after Brixton, "Brick Lane would be next."

Local restaurant manager Ruhun Chowdhury said: "It was a big explosion. I thought it was a gas cable or something. Later I discovered it was a bomb. I saw the flames all over Brick Lane."

Crime rate down in Iraq, police pleased with prisoner lectures

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's crime rate dropped significantly in 1998, according to the nation's top police official, who also praised a programme that frees prisoners after intensive lectures by members of the ruling party meant to reintegrate them into society.

Overall, crime dropped 7.8 per cent in 1998 compared to 1997. Brig. Gen. Hameed Othman Saba'a, director general of police, said in an interview published on Wednesday in Alwan weekly newspaper. "Murders went down by 18.9 per cent while murder attempts went down by 16.33 per cent in 1998," Saba'a was quoted as saying.

Reported thefts dropped the most — 49 per cent, he

said.

Saba'a provided only percentages and did not say whether there were types of crimes that had increased. He also did not explain reasons for the drop.

Possible factors include the U.N. oil-for-food programme, which began in December 1996 and took time to ease Iraq's dire economic situation, and the stronger presence of the ruling Baath Party's militia. A high profile nationwide is meant to discourage uprising attempts while U.S. and Britain planes are flying over the country.

Crime rates increased in Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War. Many government and private sector businesses closed because U.N. sanctions imposed after Iraq's

1990 invasion of Kuwait created a shortage of raw materials and spare parts, leaving tens of thousands of people newly unemployed.

People began stealing food and medicine, which became scarce and expensive after the war. In late 1996, however, the United Nations began allowing Iraq to sell some oil to buy humanitarian supplies. The U.N. also has approved some equipment purchases that have allowed some factories to reopen, easing unemployment slightly.

In the interview with Alwan, the national police chief also said that 2,088 prisoners were set free in 1998 after receiving lectures from Baath Party members. Lectures focus on religious issues, life

after prison, how crime damages an entire family's reputation and how it harms a country already hard-hit by international sanctions.

The three-month course was approved by President Saddam in 1997 in order to give all prisoners an opportunity to rejoin and contribute to society. Prisoners take an exam at the end of the course to determine how qualified they are to be released.

"Only 43 prisoners were imprisoned for committing crimes after being set free, which represents a good percentage," Saba'a was quoted as saying.



Syrian President Hafez Assad receives Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov in Damascus on Saturday. Ivanov reiterated Moscow's backing for a resumption of Israel-Syria peace talks based on an Israeli agreement to return the Golan Heights (AFP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran blames fundamentalist group for attack on judicial official

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran said on Saturday it had arrested the leader of a previously unknown fundamentalist religious network for the attempted assassination of a leading judicial official in January. Ali Razini, head of Tehran's justice department, was paralysed in the legs after the bomb attack which also left one person dead and another four injured. Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of the Revolutionary Guards army, said a fundamentalist Shiite Muslim group called Mahdaviat was behind the attack and that its leader Hassan Milani had been arrested. Tehran had previously blamed the People's Mujahadeen, Iran's main armed opposition group, on Wednesday of carrying out the attack. Jafari said members of the network had stolen guns and weapons from various Tehran mosques, adding that Milani was a close relative of Ayatollah Mohammad Hadi Milani, a prominent Shiite scholar who died before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Four Israeli civilians killed in plane crash

TEL AVIV (AP) — Four Israeli parachutists were killed on Saturday when their plane crashed after take-off and six sustained serious injuries, the civil aviation spokesman said. One of the plane's engines failed minutes after it left the ground from an airfield in Haifa, north of Tel Aviv, said aviation spokesman Nir Yarkoni. The pilot attempted an emergency landing but crashed into a mountainside, Yarkoni said. Rescue workers evacuated the injured by helicopter to two hospitals in Haifa, said Israel's Army Radio. Yarkoni said there were nine passengers and one pilot aboard the plane. Army Radio said the passengers were members of a sky divers club.

Three women killed, 26 injured in explosion at Turkish baths

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Three women were killed and 26 others injured on Saturday in an explosion at a public bath in Isparta in southeastern Turkey, the Anatolia news agency reported. The explosion was thought to have been caused by a defect in the bathhouse's water pump, Anatolia said. The victims were all women, as the bath was open only to women during daytime. Rescue teams were searching the rubble, but Governor Erzurul Dokuzoglu said it was unlikely that more victims were still trapped underneath.



Lebanese students express anger at the United Nations during a demonstration at Beirut's Martyrs Square to protest the Israeli army's recent take over of the village of Amoun, at the edge of the Israeli-occupied border zone in southern Lebanon (AFP photo)

Fateh divided over date of state declaration

(Continued from page 1)

Fateh, the largest and most influential body in the PLO, was formed by Arafat and a number of leaders in 1965 as a guerrilla group advocating armed struggle for a Palestinian homeland.

In 1993, Fateh leaders secretly negotiated and signed the landmark Oslo peace deals with Israel which launched self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Ahmad Qureia, a senior Fateh official and speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said a declaration must go ahead.

"I believe that a declaration will fill a legal and political vacuum that will emerge after the interim period expires. A delay, however, will have many risks, such as extending the duration of occupation of our lands," Qureia said.

Israel's right-wing government, led by Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has said a statehood declaration would violate peace deals and has threatened to annex parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Arafat goes ahead.

"There's a struggle within each one of us. Our hearts say declare a state on May 4 come what may. Our minds say delay for political reasons," said Sufian Abu Zaid, a young Fateh official.

Sudan government agrees to cease-fire in southern state

KHARTOUM (AP) — The Sudanese government has accepted a rebel offer to renew a limited cease-fire in southern Sudan to allow humanitarian aid to reach famine-stricken areas, a government statement said on Friday.

On April 5, the government offered the Southern People's Liberation Army a comprehensive cease-fire, but the rebels agreed only to a truce renewal in the southern Bahr Al Ghazal province.

In accepting the partial truce, the government still stands by its offer for a complete cease-fire, said a statement by the foreign ministry. The move was to facilitate relief efforts, said the statement, which was carried by the official Sudan news agency.

But it said the government also hoped the move would encourage the rebels to accept a complete cease-fire.

Under pressure from international aid agencies and foreign powers, the government and the SPLA already have agreed to two similar cease-fires in Bahr Al Ghazal since October. The last cease-fire expired on April 15.

More than 1.9 million people have died in fighting and war-related famines since 1983, when civil war broke out between southern rebels and the government in the north.

Sudan reports mediation with rebels

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's foreign minister said a former Sudanese vice president and critic of the government is mediating to end the war between rebels and Khartoum, state radio reported on Saturday.

Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail said Abul Alier had met with Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) leader John Garang in London and Uganda as part of his mediation efforts.

"This is the first time Alier has come in as a mediator," Ismail said, adding Alier has been in contact with the government.

Sudan's Islamist government and the SPLA were due to have peace talks in Nairobi on April 20 but the talks were postponed.

"The postponement of the peace talks took place to bring closer the [two sides] viewpoints, which is being undertaken by Abel Alier," the radio quoted Ismail as saying.

Alier was vice president under former President Jaafar Nimairi, who was deposed in 1985 in a popular uprising. He has been a persistent critic of President Omar Hassan Al Bashir's government.

The government and the SPLA agree a referendum has to take place to determine whether southern Sudan will secede but they disagree on how to administer Sudan in the interim period.

The SPLA wants two confederal states but the government insists on a federation.

A copy of Alier's proposals obtained by Reuters reaffirms southern self-determination and calls for the formation of a supreme authority to run Sudan for an interim period of two years before a referendum on unity or partition.

The authority would consist of Sudan's president, the head of the SPLA, who is also to be the interim administrator in the south, and an equal number of representatives.

The SPLA has been fighting for more than 15 years for greater autonomy for the mainly black, Christian south from the mostly Muslim, Arabised north.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00French Programme
18:30 The Prince and The Pauper
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:33French Programme
20:30Walker Texas Ranger
21:15Divine Pledge
22:00News in English
22:20Falling for a Dancer

PRAYER TIMES

03:28Fajr
04:52(Sunrise) Doha
11:34Dhuhr
15:12Asr
18:15Maghreb
19:39Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweithel, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Armenian International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweithel Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Moderate to warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures higher than average by 5-6 degrees centigrade. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman14/30
Aqaba18/34
Deserts12/32
Jordan Valley17/34

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 30 Aqaba 31. Humidity readings: Amman 19 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun13/25
Jerash16/30
Um Qays15/30
Madaba13/28
Petra15/29
Dead Sea18/36

USEFUL TELEPHONE NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Yusef Rashid4875792
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhahab4758848
Dr. Khalil Jhalil4784450
Dr. Walid Al-Masri5675485

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruh Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Salih02/246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy02/275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh05/982799
Palestine Pharmacy05/983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 1924621111/4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints489467
Arman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information. 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Lazmaia4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642411/2
Akileh Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital09/986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital09/990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02/275555
Roman Catholic Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:35Aqaba (add) (RJ)
08:10Beirut (RJ)
08:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:05Bombay (RJ)

09:20Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:20Larnaca (RJ)
16:45New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:50London (RJ)
18:30Athens (RJ)
18:20Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:25Frankfurt (RJ)
19:35Rome (RJ)
20:00Paris, Brussels (RJ)
22:00Paris (add) (RJ)
22:10Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
23:55Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

07:55Dubai (EK)
09:00Sanaa (Y)
10:30Kuwait (KU)
11:50Moscow (SU)
12:00Abu Dhabi (GF)
12:30Jeddah (SV)
14:15Doha (QR)
17:35Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
04:30Beirut (RJ)
05:00Aqaba (add) (RJ)
05:30Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)

08:30Frankfurt (RJ)
09:30Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
09:50Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:15Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30Rome (RJ)
12:25London (RJ)
13:00Athens (RJ)
20:05Cairo (RJ)
20:20New Delhi (RJ)
20:20Jeddah (RJ)
20:40Damascus (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:40Bangkok (RJ)
23:45Sanaa (RJ)
00:30Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

09:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (EK)
10:00Sanaa (Y)
11:45Kuwait (KU)
12:05Doha (GF)
13:20Moscow (SU)
14:00Jeddah (SV)
15:15Doha (QR)
18:35Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:15 Tel Aviv (arriving from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



Kurdi and the Spice Girl's Sporty Spice at the 'One Night of Peace' celebration in the United States (Photo courtesy Rania Kurdi)

Singer hopes to bring 'One Night of Peace' to Jordan

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — Jordan's singer Rania Kurdi returned after participating in the "One Night of Peace" celebration in New Jersey, March 31-April 3rd, where she sang for thousands of children from around the world with one message in mind: "World peace is peace for all."

"It was an honour to be the only Arab in an international event for peace," Kurdi said in a press conference on Saturday.

The event started with a walk led by Danny Garcia, founder and executive director of Our World Foundation, a non-profit organisation designed to promote world peace through children of all nations, accompanied by over 10,000 peace lovers," she said.

"The walk began from the Sandy Hook National Park to the Count Basie Theatre,"

Kurdi added.

A group of famous artists and singers participated in the event, including Melanie Chisham, better known as the all-girl British pop group Spice Girls' Sporty Spice, Joan O'Neil and her band River Deep, the Candle Brothers, the Spanish singer Baizita, Holiday Express, Godsons of Soul, Amie Kovac and Bruce Foster.

Rania's song her own song, "Sweet Innocence" during the event.

"It was a great moment for me to perform my own song and then take part with all the group in a One Night of Peace," Kurdi said.

"Proceeds from the event went to Danny Garcia's Walk Around the World Foundation, the Dreams for Kids Foundation, founded by Dennis McGinnis, that grants special wishes to terminally-ill children, and the Count Basie

Learning Centre, run by the Reverend Elmer Jackson, that supports children's academic, social, recreational and cultural development," Kurdi said.

Rania hopes to bring the event to Jordan some day. "I am willing to organise the event here as now I have the connections and the experience," Kurdi told the Jordan Times.

"One obstacle though, may hinder our efforts of having 'One Night of Peace' here in the Kingdom," Kurdi said. "Financial support."

When she is not busy in charity work, Kurdi goes back to her first love — singing.

"I am currently working on a new single to be released soon and on my own talk show 'Rania's Show,' which will be back soon with more social issues to be tackled," she told the Jordan Times.

Prosecutor may consider appeal of court decision to acquit Abu Khajil

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Amman Prosecutor General said on Saturday that he will start reviewing last week's acquittal of the former honorary counsel of Sri Lanka, who was charged in 1997 with the rape and molestation of Sri Lankan domestic helpers.

Last week, the Criminal Court declared Tawfiq Abu Khajil, 58, innocent of sexually assaulting four Sri Lankan domestic helpers in 1997 because of lack of evidence.

"The court decided to acquit Abu Khajil because the four women, who are the main witnesses in the case, contradicted their testimonies in court," a judicial source told the Jordan Times.

The source added that Prosecutor General Sa'ed Hayajneh will start revising the case "to decide whether or not to appeal the Criminal Court's ruling."

The court tribunal was comprised of justices Mohammad Ajarmeh, Mifleh Mubeidin and

Issa Hamdan.

The rape charges were brought against Abu Khajil after the authorities' investigation of a high-profile case known then as "Sale of Babies," of which Abu Khajil was accused, in addition to other charges of forgery and abuse of office.

The case surfaced when airport police stopped a Dutch couple from leaving the country in March 1996 with forged documents that indicated they had adopted a baby after paying the sum of \$8,000.

He was convicted by the Court of First Instance in 1997 of selling one baby and attempting to sell another and of forging official documents and was sentenced to three years in prison.

His sentence has been reviewed by the Court of Cassation twice in the past two years. The cassation court in March of this year asked the Court of Appeals to pass a tougher sentence against Abu Khajil.

The case is currently being reviewed by the Court of Appeals.

Extraordinary session expected for Lower House of Parliament

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament is expected to open an extraordinary session in the coming few weeks to discuss a set of draft laws, especially in the economic sector, a lawmaker said on Saturday.

Bassam Haddadin, acting speaker of the Lower House, said that although there has been no "official request" from the government to open a session, officials have indirectly indicated their willingness to hold one.

"The government is willing to have such a session and has prepared its agenda for the proposed session," Haddadin told the Jordan Times.

The lawmaker said that among the issues expected to be discussed are banks and insurance companies draft laws. Another draft law tackles investment promotion.

Haddadin said that deputies also "have their own priorities and might propose some ideas that could be debated during the expected session."

The MP, who represents the northern governorate of Zarqa, did not say when the session is expected to open, but noted that "things will be clear in the coming two weeks."

Only a Royal Decree would permit an extraordinary ses-

sion to open, the deputy added.

Earlier this month, the 80-member House recessed after its ordinary session extended for two weeks to allow for confidence voting on the government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh earlier this month.

In its policy statement, the government indicated that it would draft new laws to govern the banking and insurance sectors along with other regulations which should be endorsed by the chamber.

Meanwhile, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdul Ilah Khateib on Saturday met with members of the Arab Affairs Committee at the Lower House and briefed them on King Abdullah's recent tour of the Arab states.

Deputy Abdullah Jazi (Southern Bedouins), who attended the meeting, said that Khateib briefed them on the outcomes of the King's visit to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Libya and Syria.

Jazi added that the minister also discussed the King's plans to visit some European states and the headquarters of the European Commission ahead of his scheduled visit to the United States in May.

"We believe that the general atmosphere in our relations with Arab states is improving, especially with the Gulf states.

This will reflect positively on their investments in the Kingdom," Jazi said.

Deputy Mohammad Thweib, another member in the Arab Affairs Committee, described Jordan's future relations with Syria as "promising."

Thweib indicated that the minister has informed them that the Jordan-Syria Higher Committee is expected to hold its first meeting since 1989 next June.

The deputy said that Jordanian and Syrian officials have agreed to form a joint committee to discuss the issue of Jordanian prisoners and detainees in Syrian jails, an issue which has overshadowed the relationship for years.

Jordan has repeatedly demanded the release of more than 350 prisoners, some of whom have been jailed since late sixties.

Thweib said that Syrian President Hafiz Assad has given directives to Syrian officials to launch serious talks with Jordan on the proposed JD152 million Al Wihdah Dam at the Yarmouk River. The countries hope the dam will help alleviate Jordan's chronic water shortage and generate electric power to Syria.

Labour Ministry, chambers sign agreements on job training

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Labour on Saturday concluded four memorandums with local organisations to coordinate efforts to deal with unemployment by providing training for job seekers.

Under the agreement, signed with the Jordanian Engineers Association, the Bakers Union, and the Zarqa and Irbid Chambers of Industry, the two sides will cooperate to train job seekers in skills and trades demanded by the local labour market.

They will also serve as a "go between" to help trainees find jobs after their training, according to Minister of Labour Eid Al Fayed.

The minister, who attended the signing ceremony, said the private sector assumes a leading role in helping Jordanians replace guest workers, whose numbers are estimated to be in hundreds of thousands.

Officially, the Kingdom's unemployment rate stands at 16 per cent, but unofficial studies

place the rate at 27 per cent.

Nader Marian, head of the Labour ministry's department undertaking the job training programme, said the ministry pays the wages of on-the-job trainees employed by different businesses for a limited period of time to ensure that businesses continue to employ them for at least one year.

Marian said the memoranda stipulate that job seekers will be trained in trades currently mainly occupied by guest workers.

Jordan to be polio-free by the year 2000, says health minister

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Health Organisation has listed Jordan among the first group of nations within the Mediterranean zone expected to be declared polio free next year, said Minister of Health Isahq Maraga on Saturday.

In remarks during the launch of a nation-wide anti-polio inoculation campaign for children under five years of age, the minister said at least 740,000 children within this age group, including Jordanians and other nationalities, will be immunised against the disease.

Maraga, who was speaking at Abu Nuseir Health Centre northwest of Amman, said the ministry's campaign is supported by the United Nations Children's Fund and WHO. He also noted that the inoculation is a back-up to last month's initial immunisation dose.

The five-day campaign is conducted free of charge throughout 10 centres in Amman.

Haidar Utoum, head of the ministry's immunisation department, urged parents to arrange for their children to be immunised. He added that all government-run hospitals — those of the Jordan Armed Forces, the Jordan University Hospital and the United Nations Relief Works Agency's health centres are also offering the inoculation.

Utoum said the Health Ministry aims to eradicate polio from Jordan by the year 2000 and stressed the fact that not a single polio case has been reported in the Kingdom since 1994 when the inoculation campaigns first started. He said the back-up, or the second dose, was necessary to completely eradicate the virus which causes the disease.

By Rana Hussein and Ghazi Amareen

AMMAN — Two women were killed Saturday morning in Tafleh by their 37-year-old cousin who claimed that he killed them for their "immoral behaviour," according to official sources.

The victims, R.A., 31, who has been divorced for the past two years, and her sister, L.A., 21, became the seventh and eighth women reportedly killed in the Kingdom for honour-related reasons since the beginning of the year.

Each woman was shot three times in the head by

their cousin, Z.K., at around 9:00 a.m. The suspect surrendered to police shortly thereafter and "claimed it was a crime of honour," one source said.

According to one source, the "two girls had been treated as outcasts for the past six months by their family because they stepped out of society's boundaries."

Another source told the Jordan Times on Saturday that the two sisters, who lived in Jabal Jofeh in Amman with their mother, used to stay away from their home for several days, and "that is why their family killed them."

On Saturday morning, the source added, their cousin and a brother took them from Amman to Tafleh, where the cousin, a father of six, shot them.

The victims' bodies were transferred to the National Institute of Forensic Medicine in Amman for autopsies.

Police contacted by the Jordan Times confirmed the incident, but declined comment.

Last year, around 20 women were killed in the Kingdom in the name of "honour."

What's Going On

Lebanese Film Festival

• Four films "Jir Al Qamar," "Ruins," "Between Me and You," and "Living Icons" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m.
• Three films "The Children of Shabilla," "The Kidnapped," and "Muscles" at Abdul Hameed Shomran Foundation, Jabal Amman, on Tuesday April 27 at 6:30 p.m.

Films

• French film "Vivement Dimanche" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday April 26 at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
• "The Full Monty" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).
Lectures
• Lecture by Jordanian poet Yousef Abdul Aziz about his own experience in writing poetry (to be followed by poetry recitals) at Darat Al Fumun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m.
• "How Memory Works and Sometimes Doesn't" by Dr. Mark Gluck at the American Center/U.S. Embassy, Abdoun at 5:00 p.m.

Exhibitions

• Seventh Annual Book Exhibition at the Bishop's School, Jabal Amman, until April 29. hand-woven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).

Russian envoy criticises proposed naval blockade

(Continued from page 1)

In Belgrade, people were still trapped in the debris of the Serbian Television (RTS) building, destroyed by NATO missiles early Friday, an RTS reporter told AFP.

"There are still some alive inside, they are calling by mobile phones," Zvonko Mihajlovski, a senior sports editor at the scene said.

At least 10 people were killed and 18 injured in the NATO bombing of the TV headquarters and 20 people were still feared to be trapped inside what was left of the building.

More than 5,000 people gathered Saturday in central Belgrade to pay their respects to the victims of the television building bombing. Many laid flowers and lit candles near the site of the bombed-out building.

In Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross said it planned to meet Milosevic in Belgrade on Monday.

ICRC Chief Cornelio Sommaruga wanted to speak with the Yugoslav leader above all about the plight of people in Kosovo, a spokeswoman said.

The Red Cross was hoping for assurances that it would be allowed access to civilians in Kosovo and could operate in safety.

The case of three U.S. soldiers held by Yugoslavia and the impact of NATO bombing on Yugoslav civilians were also likely to be discussed.

Meanwhile, the Dutch daily Algemeen Dagblad said Saturday that several photos distributed by NATO show possible mass graves in Kosovo could be fake.

The paper based its claims on analyses carried out by a map expert specialising in the study of satellite photos, who examined four pictures taken over the Kosovo villages of Pusto Selo and Izbica.

NATO showed two photos of each village. In each case, one of the photos shows the area before the alleged graves were dug and the second, taken several days later, appears to show a number of freshly dug graves. According to the expert, identified only as E. Buric, the most recent photos displayed worrying inconsistencies.

He said that in the second picture of the Pusto Selo village,

there is a house which does not feature in the image taken a few days before.

He said: "Either the Kosovars had time between the massacres to build a house in a few nights, or the photo has been manipulated."

He said the photo of Izbica showing rows of graves had "touch-up work which could only be the result of two different pictures being superimposed."

Buric, who runs a studio in the central Dutch town of Almere specialising in work for the country's top publishers and for military maps, could not be reached for comment.

In Bonn, an ethnic Albanian leader warned that the more than 600,000 Kosovars that have been forced to flee the province will never return as long as it is under Serbian rule.

"After all that has happened in Kosovo and that the Serbs have done to our people, it is unimaginable that Kosovo Albanians will again be forced to live under any sort of Serbian sovereignty," Bujar Bukoshi told the weekly Welt am Sonntag.

Jordan, UAE sign agreement for judicial cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and the UAE signed on Saturday an agreement for judicial cooperation, streamlining legal procedures and exchanging expertise and information pertaining to legal procedures.

The agreement was signed on behalf of Jordan by Minister of Justice Hamzeh Haddad and on the UAE side by Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Tahiri.

The agreement aims at launching training programmes for Jordanian and UAE judges and lawyers and exchanging visits by Jordanian and UAE judges.

Haddad said the agreement will be effective once it passes through its constitutional and legal phases.

For his part, Tahiri

said that this agreement is a real model for cooperation between the two countries, noting that signing the agreement comes within the framework of strengthening bilateral cooperation during the reign of His Majesty King Abdullah.

Tahiri and the accompanying delegation visited the Palace of Justice where they were briefed by President of the Higher Jordanian Judicial Council and President of the Court of Cassation Taher Hikmat on the services extended to the citizens, lawyers and judges.

Later on, the delegation toured the palace, voicing their admiration of the unique building and the facilities accorded to the public.

Journalists debate merit of new, non-quota council

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — Members of the Jordan Press Association (JPA) on Saturday said that they were unsure whether change to the JPA law earlier last summer had played in the favour of more independence for the organisation.

"In spite of the change to the [JPA law], it seems that the council has stayed more or less the same," said Imad Hajaj, an Al Ra'i cartoonist.

"I still think that we need more changes to the association law to overcome some imbalances and give equal opportunities and representation on the board. We also need to find a way to make sure that journalists aren't under pressure from their organisations to vote a certain way."

Under the former JPA law, the council was reserved for three representatives each from the government-owned Jordan News Agency, Petra, the newspaper owners and the "private sector" papers.

Journalists argued that the arrangement effectively hamstringing the organisation both by ensuring government domination over the organisation through Petra's representation and through the representation of the 61 per cent government-owned Al Ra'i and by pitting the interest of the employees against that of the owners.

That regulation was abolished in the new law, enacted last summer by both Houses of Parliament just after the endorsement of the controversial 1998 Press and Publications Law. Journalists said the quota-free

system gave the organisation a chance to secure more independence.

Yet on Friday, the JPA general assembly went to the polls for the second time in a year to elect a new president and nine-member board. It returned three members from Petra and three from Al Ra'i, a paper that, although technically a private sector paper, is generally regarded as a government mouthpiece by most because of its majority equity in the establishment.

"There are two factors to consider," said one editor of a magazine who requested anonymity and who said he cast a blank ballot for the presidency. "Most establishments pressure their employees to vote for candidates from that establishment."

"The second point is that most journalists don't care about an independent council because most journalists in this country don't understand what their association should be doing," he said referring to the on-going debate over the press law.

"They care about housing allowances and a new facility for the association...things that shouldn't matter to independent journalists," he said.

Others argue that the absence of the quota has affected change for the better.

"I don't see that the council is dominated by the official media," said Bassem Sakijha. "In fact, I see it the opposite. Petra, for example, fielded four candidates, all of whom they believed would make it to the board. There are three members

from Petra on the board, but in reality, you can say that only two are representing Petra."

Petra's Nader Khatatbeh, also a writer for Al Ra'i, claims that he received most of his support from Al Ra'i.

"The other representatives of Petra, especially Omar Shniekar, are very independent minded," he said. "The other members who made it are like minded. It's also better because many of the newspaper owners who sat on previous boards, who usually won by default, were [displaced]."

Other owners who made it to the board — Nidal Mansour, owner and editor of Al Hadath, and Dina Zorba, owner and editor of Al Sharqiat — earned their votes.

Others see the turnout as a reflection of the "balance of power" in the newspaper industry. In the association, employees of Petra, Al Ra'i and Al Dustour — whose figurehead Seif Sherif won the presidency — claim the majority of members in the 452-member JPA. They are represented by roughly 250 members in the general assembly.

"The [election results] are a strong indication of the prior agreements that were struck ahead of elections to maintain the balance in the absence of the quota system," said Al Dustour Chief Editor Nabil Sherif. "The end result was good because one side of the institution should not claim more [representation] than it deserves."

Town buries shooting victim as police pursue leads

LITTLETON, Colo. (R) — This Small Denver suburb on Saturday turned to the business of burying the first of 15 people who died in America's deadliest school shooting, a popular girl who wanted to be an actress.

The services for 17-year-old Rachel Scott were expected to attract hundreds of her classmates, along with mourners from the community who have taken the slain students of Columbine High School into their hearts.

The first memorial service was held on Friday morning for 16-year-old John Tomlin, who will be buried in Wisconsin.

Scott's red Acura Legend, still sitting in a school parking lot where she left it the day she was shot to death, has become a focal point for her mourning classmates who covered it with flowers, stuffed animals and handwritten prayers.

Images of the car have been beamed around the world as a haunting symbol of a violent school tragedy in small-town America.

Meanwhile, police appeared no closer to naming a third suspect who may have helped students Eric Harris, 18, and Dylan Klebold, 17, plant bombs or plan their assault on the

school. Colorado's Rocky Mountain News reported on Friday that investigators were seeking a teenager suspected of lugging duffel bags into the school and fleeing before Harris and Klebold opened fire.

The largest bomb discovered at Columbine was a 9-kilogram propane tank wired to a gasoline can found in a duffel bag. No one has reported seeing Harris or Klebold carry such an unwieldy package into the building.

But faced with repeated questions from reporters about a third suspect, Jefferson county sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Jim Parr has said no such accomplice had yet been identified.

Part also could not confirm reports that keys to the school had been found on Klebold, or that a custodian caught the two teenagers in the school cafeteria the night before the attack.

While investigators intensified the hunt for possible accomplices in the massacre, officials released the dramatic 911 emergency tapes from the day of the shootings.

On one tape, a teacher is heard screaming: "Kids, under the table. Kids, stay on the floor," as the sound

of gunfire echoed in the hallway outside the library. "Oh God, Oh God, kids, just stay down," she said as she told the 911 operator that a gunman's bullet had hit a student standing near her.

"He turned the gun straight at us and shot ... and the kid standing there was hit ... we need police here. He's (the gunman) right outside here. He's outside in the hall," the teacher said.

She said she was lying on the floor and the dispatcher asked if she could lock the doors when suddenly there were seven shots. "I don't think I'm going to go out there, OK. I've got kids on the floor. OK," she said.

The 911 operator tried to keep the teacher calm by telling her that help was on the way. Police did not identify the teacher but said she survived the attack.

When the gunfire had ended, 12 bodies — nine boys and three girls — were found in the school library.

Klebold and Harris belonged to an outcast group at the high school called the "Trenchcoat mafia" and were often the butt of jokes. The clique of about a dozen people often had discussions about violent activities, and police



Columbine High School students and friends of John Robert Tomlin hug at the conclusion of the memorial service at Foothills Bible Church for Tomlin in Littleton, Colorado. Tomlin died during the attack by teen gunmen at the high school April 20 (Reuters photo)

have interviewed other members of that group.

The teenagers had recently finished a juvenile programme after they got in

trouble in early 1998 for stealing from a car. They have been described by fellow students as very intelligent and received a glowing

report at the end of the programme. In the days before the attack, they worked at a local pizza parlour and went to a high school prom.

New violence erupts in Indonesia's Moluccas

JAKARTA (R) — Thousands of Muslims and Christians fought a pitched battle in Indonesia's strife-torn Moluccas spice islands on Saturday, killing about 60 people, witnesses said.

However, military officials denied the death toll, saying that nobody died in the fighting.

"That is not true. Nobody died today," a military official at Tual, the main town of the remote Kai Besar island, told Reuters.

A local journalist at the scene of the fighting said most of the victims were killed by exploding homemade devices and petrol bombs which both groups hurled at one another.

"About 60 people died when thousands of Muslims and Christians fought with one another this afternoon, hurling homemade bombs and Molotov cocktails," said the journalist.

The dead included

three members of a special police force.

The fighting followed a similar outburst of violence on Friday which killed about 22 people. Tual is close to the island of Ambon, where more than 200 people have died in sectarian violence this year.

The journalist said the fighting erupted when several policemen, dressed in civilian clothes, opened fire on the two opposing groups which had gathered at Tual.

"It's unclear why those few policemen opened fire. We also don't know whether they were off duty," he said.

Initially, the two opposing groups were separated by troops from a special anti-riot task force. When the police began shooting, the soldiers returned fire and many of them ran in the direction of the gunfire.

"Seeing a loosening of the soldiers' numbers, the two groups started to

attack one another," said the journalist.

A local resident told Reuters the situation was tense and that gunfire and the sound of explosives could be heard throughout the afternoon. "We are very worried," she said.

The military official said the mobs had since dispersed and that the situation has been brought under control.

Telephone connections to the island have been down for most of the day.

On Monday, religion-related violence killed seven people on the nearby tiny island of Banda.

Indonesia, home to some 300 ethnic groups, has been hit by a wave of sectarian and ethnic violence in the past year.

The violence has been fuelled by the country's deepening economic crisis, the worst in 30 years, which has sent millions into abject poverty.

E. Timorese retrieve bodies after new attacks

DILI, East Timor (R) — East Timorese villagers pulled rotting corpses from the ocean on Saturday after new attacks by pro-Jakarta militia despite a U.N.-brokered deal that could lead to the territory's independence.

Church and human rights workers said they feared the final death toll from this week's blood-letting could top 100.

They could not say how many bodies were retrieved from southern Suai, about 200 km southwest of Dili. At least eight victims of attacks by the militia fighting for continued Indonesian rule had previously been identified.

"The number may be more than 100 dead because the attacks were scattered over several districts and reports are still coming in," a Dili-based human rights worker, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

"The situation in Suai is very, very tense," he added, saying refugees had sheltered in a church.

"About 1,300 refugees have been asked to leave the church because they fear an attack like in Liquisa or Dili," he said, referring to earlier attacks this month in which up to 50 may have died.

"Along the sea, they have thrown in bodies and some have washed up on the beach. Some are already smelly, but there are also

fresh bodies there," he said.

He said there was no detailed body count yet because the victims were killed in sporadic attacks since Monday in several areas around Suai. A local priest, Father Hilario, said on Friday he feared this week's death toll could top 100 and that the eight identified victims had been shot or stabbed.

Around 30 people died in an earlier militia rampage last weekend.

Military and police officials were unavailable for comment on Saturday. But one military official in Dili and an official at the hospital in Suai said on Friday there had been no deaths.

As tensions increase and some pro-independence leaders go into hiding, former Jakarta-appointed governor Mario Carrascalao, who has campaigned for an independence vote, said East Timorese mercenaries had been hired to kill him.

Carrascalao, appealing for official protection, said he had received death threats and was taking his family to Portugal for their safety, but said he would return to his Jakarta home.

Loyalist militias stepped up their bloody anti-independence campaign after Indonesian President B.J. Habibie reversed a 23-year policy in January and said Jakarta may let East Timor go it alone if it rejected an offer of enhanced autonomy.

Dili-based human rights groups say up to 90 people died in attacks by pro-Jakarta militia and the Indonesian armed forces in the first three months of 1999.

The warring factions signed a peace pact on Wednesday, but the militias continue to carry guns, control some roads and effectively seal Dili off each at night with roadblocks.

Jakarta and Lisbon on Friday completed an agreement paving the way for a U.N.-organised July ballot on independence in July or August. The agreement will be signed on May 5 to give Jakarta more time to approve new sections in the accord on security and how the vote will be conducted.

The New York agreement was greeted more with relief than excitement by war-weary residents on the near-deserted streets of Dili on Saturday.

"We hope this (accord) can be completed as soon as possible to end the civil war between the people of East Timor," said journalist Domingos Saldanha.

"But I think 80 per cent of the people don't care about politics. What they care about is how can they be safe, how can they enjoy life, how can they work," said office worker Amelia Bonaparte. "About integration or independence, that's up to the leaders. The little people only know about struggling for survival."

Pioneering Everest climber dead at 92

LONDON (AP) — Charles Warren, who joined three unsuccessful attempts to climb mount Everest in the 1930s, has died at age 92.

Warren died March 30, according to obituaries published in the Times and the Guardian. The cause of death was not announced.

He made his first attempt on Everest in 1935 in an expedition led by Eric Shipton. Though they did not reach the summit, Warren made a startling discovery when he found the body of Maurice Wilson, a former soldier and mystic who had relied on fasting and prayer on an attempted climb the previous year.

Warren also found Wilson's diary, which he regarded as "an extraordinary documentary revelation of monomania and determination of purpose." Warren and his colleagues buried Wilson in a crevasse.

"We wrapped him (Wilson) in his tent and ... slid the body into the depths, where it disappeared from sight. We all raised our hats," Warren recorded in his diary.

He also joined attempts in 1935 and 1938. Though frustrated as a climber, Warren made a significant acquaintance on the Everest expeditions: he befriended Tenzing Norgay, the Sherpa who joined Edmund Hillary in taking the peak in 1953. When

Norgay visited Britain following the celebrated climb, he stayed at Warren's home.

In his career as a paediatrician, Warren helped develop ultraviolet light treatments for jaundiced infants.

Warren had a lifelong interest in the art and literature inspired by mountains, including the romantic writers and poets who visited the Alps. From his personal collection, he presented some 200 items to the Wordsworth trust at Grasmere, including Gainsborough's "Langdale pikes" and a Turner watercolor of Lake Como.

His wife Dorothy died in 1992. They had no children.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenians mark 1915 genocide anniversary

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Armenians commemorated the anniversary of a massacre of their countrymen Saturday with church services and a wreath-laying ceremony at a monument to the victims. A line 1.5 kilometres formed early in the day, as people waited in the rain to pay their respects at the eternal flame which burns by the monument. Armenian President Robert Kocharyan, in the United States for NATO's 50th anniversary, was to attend a liturgy in Washington to mark the occasion. Approximately 1.5 million Armenians in what was then Ottoman Turkey died between 1915 and 1923 in genocidal violence motivated by centuries-old ethnic and religious rivalries. The killing began on April 24, 1915, when Turkish soldiers killed 235 Armenian intellectuals and political leaders, accusing them of helping the invading Russians during World War I. The Turks then began deporting Armenians living in eastern Turkey to Syria. The mass deaths occurred during the deportation. Turkey says 300,000 Armenians died in the deportation but rejects accusations of genocide. Animosity towards Turks remains strong in Armenia. Ankara and Yerevan have no diplomatic relations with each other. Armenia gained independence for a brief period after 1918, but was then incorporated into the Soviet Union. It regained independence during the Soviet collapse in 1991.

New Niger strongman meets Abubakar for 'private talks'

ABUJA (AFP) — Niger's new strongman, Major Daouda Malam Wanke, met Nigeria's military ruler here Saturday for what officials called "private talks" on his first trip here since taking power two weeks ago. Wanke arrived in Abuja shortly before 9:00 a.m. (0800 GMT) for the talks with General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who has criticised the April 9 killing which brought Wanke to power. The former head of the Niger presidential bodyguard took power in Niamey after members of the guard shot dead the previous head of state, Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, on April 9. The assassination of Mainassara has been condemned by the Economic Community of West African States, the Organisation of African Unity, the European Union and the United States. The European Union has threatened to sever ties with Niger over the killing at a military base, which Wanke at the present as an accident, though it occurred amid political turmoil and a badly injured aide said that Mainassara was decisively finished off after surviving a first bout of shooting. Abubakar last week-end called the killing a "sad event" and reiterated his belief that the era of military rule was over in the world, west Africa included. Wanke has promised to hold elections in November. Abubakar is himself due to hand power to an elected civilian president on May 29. Officials on Saturday asked journalists to vacate the presidential office where Abubakar met Wanke and said there would be no communiqué issued after the two men's talks. Ties with Nigeria are important for Niamey which shares a 1,500-kilometre border with the country.

British government 'not aware' of Chile's Pinochet proposal

LONDON (AFP) — The British government said Saturday it was "not aware" of any demand by Chile for international arbitration to settle the question of where former dictator Augusto Pinochet should be tried. Chilean Foreign Minister Jose Miguel Insulza said Friday in Santiago that his country intended to put forward the proposal. He said if Britain insisted on proceeding with extraditing the 83-year-old senator to Spain to face trial on charges connected to his 1973-1990 dictatorship, Chile would take the case to the U.N.'s International Court of Justice in The Hague. A spokesman for the Home Office in London said: "We are not aware of that proposition ... it's a matter for them." Home Secretary Jack Straw gave the green light for the extradition proceedings to go ahead on April 15.

Malaysian police identify suspected protesters through newspapers

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian police have identified dozens of suspected anti-government protesters through "wanted" photographs published in newspapers, the official Bernama news agency said on Saturday. "Some arrests were made and some of them came voluntarily to surrender themselves," Kuala Lumpur police chief Kamarudin Mohamed Ali was quoted as saying, referring to the campaign. National newspapers on Friday began publishing the photographs of 45 people suspected of participating in protests following the sentencing on April 14 of ousted Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim to six years in jail for corruption. Kamarudin said that 80 per cent had been identified from the pictures, reportedly taken by police photographers during the protests. In a related development, Kamarudin said eight high school students were detained for questioning Saturday over an attack on a car belonging to a Malaysian television station on April 14. He also said that a man detained by police had admitted to being paid 20 ringgit (\$5.26) to take part in anti-government protests. "The man, who is unemployed, was held while riding a stolen motorcycle. Investigations showed he was involved in the incident and he admitted he was paid," he was quoted as saying. Anwar was fired in early September and arrested two and half weeks later after leading a series of anti-government protests calling on Prime Minister Mahatir Mohamad to step down. Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail has repeatedly said her newly formed National Justice Party (Keadilan) was not behind the demonstrations and that the protests were incited by police.

Four boys die of snakebite in Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Four young boys looking for a nestling died when they were bitten by snakes in a tree trunk in northern Bangladesh, a newspaper said Saturday. The four, in the age-group 9-12, included two brothers. They were bitten Thursday as they put their hands in the tree hole one after another in Dawabari village in Lalmonirhat district, 255 kilometres north of Dhaka, the Bangladesh capital, the Bhoron Kagaj newspaper said. The young boys belonged to poor families of fishermen. They returned home believing they had been pecked by a bird. But they died within hours. Grief-stricken relatives later flushed out two poisonous snakes from the tree trunk with fire and killed them.

Pakistani opposition demands prosecution of MPs in power theft scandal

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan's main opposition party Saturday demanded prosecution of 49 sitting and former lawmakers whom the government has put on a list of power pilferers.

"They have brought shame to the country," the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of former premier Benazir Bhutto said in a statement.

The party called for immediate dismissal of Cabinet Minister Chaudhry Shujat Hussain whose name figured on the list placed before the Senate here Friday by Water and Power Minister Gohar Ayub Khan.

The list also included deputy speaker of the National Assembly Chaudhry

and federal and provincial parliamentarians, the majority of them allied to the Pakistani ruling party.

They have been asked to pay outstanding dues and fines amounting to more than \$280,000, Khan told the Senate.

Khan said the pilfering was detected during an army-led drive ordered by the government to improve the financial health of the debt-ridden state water and power agency.

Population Welfare Minister Syeda Abida Hussain resigned earlier this month following allegations of power theft. In March the government handed over the electricity distribution network to the army and ordered a house-to-house

search to check for pilfering. Officials say the campaign has helped curb power thefts.

The PPP also demanded recovery of huge public sector bank loans outstanding against influential people.

According to officials, the defaulters owe more than \$2 billion to state-run commercial banks. But unofficial estimates put the figure much higher.

An editorial in the English language daily Dawn Saturday said the biggest defaulters at the moment were "bigwigs of the ruling party itself."

The Ittefaq industrial group owned by the family of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif "has yet to return its huge loans," it added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenians mark 15 genocide anniversary

N. Armenia, Apr. — Armenians commemorated the 15th anniversary of their country's genocide with church services and a wreath-laying ceremony in the capital, Yerevan. A line of people gathered at the entrance of the Armenian Parliament building to pay respects to the victims. Armenian President Robert Kocharyan on Wednesday marked the anniversary by visiting the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan. He laid a wreath at the entrance of the parliament building and met with survivors of the genocide. Kocharyan said the genocide was a "dark page" in the history of the Armenian people. He said the Armenian people will not forget the victims and will continue to fight for justice. The genocide was carried out by the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire was reduced by about 800,000 people. The genocide was recognized by the United Nations in 1948.

Niger strongman meets bubakar for 'private talks'

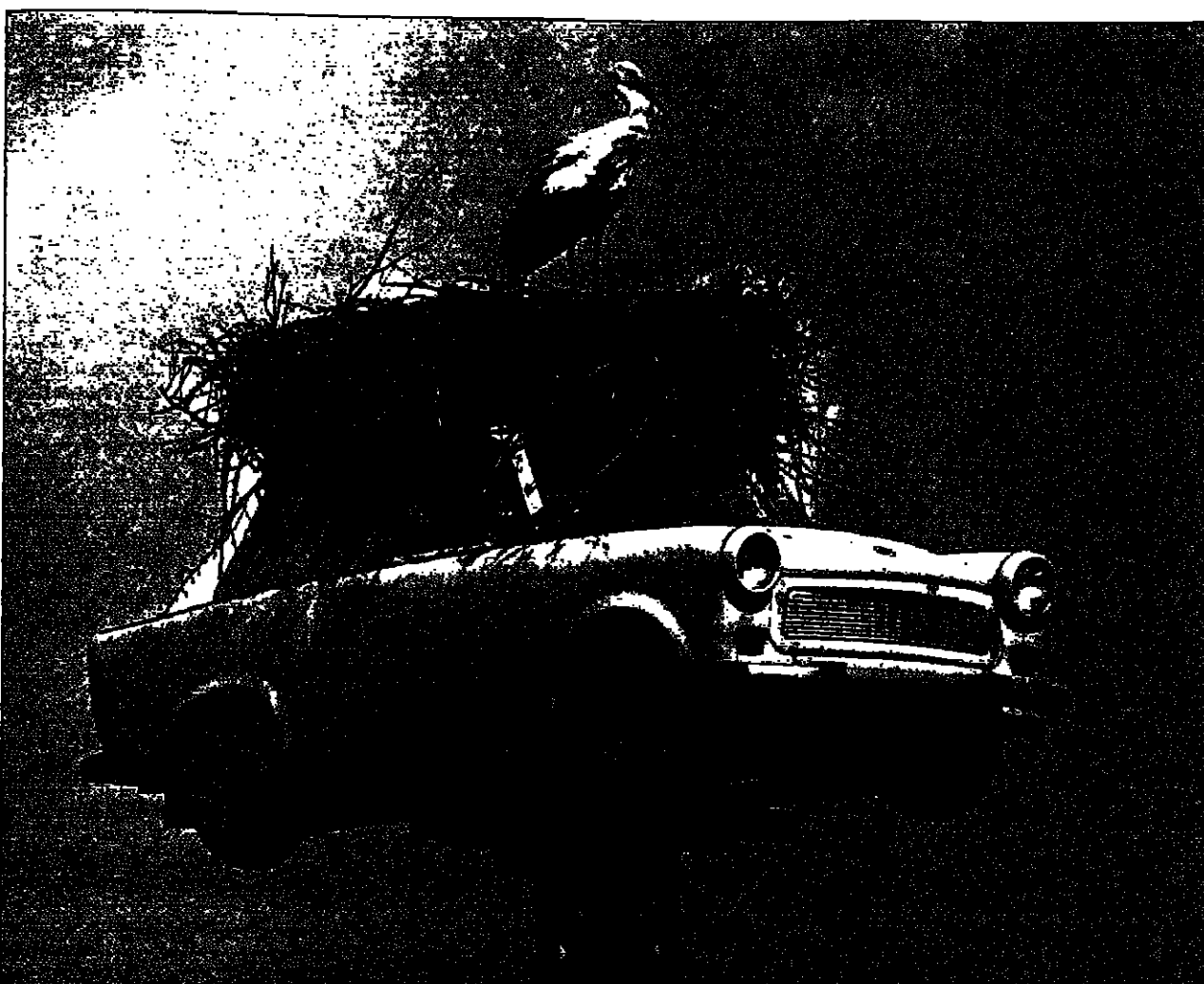
MLA, Apr. — Niger's strongman, General Ibrahim Bako Goudou, met with President Boubouh Diarra for "private talks" in Niamey. Goudou, who has been in power since 1996, is expected to remain in power for the foreseeable future. Diarra, who was elected president in 1998, is expected to continue his policies of reform and development. The two leaders discussed the current situation in Niger and the challenges ahead. Goudou said he was committed to the stability and development of the country. Diarra said he was committed to the rule of law and the welfare of the people. The talks were held in a private setting and lasted for several hours. They were expected to lead to a new agreement between the two leaders.

Chile's Pinochet proposes

Chile's Pinochet proposed a new constitution for the country. The proposal was made during a meeting with other leaders in Santiago. Pinochet said the new constitution would be based on the principles of democracy and human rights. He said the new constitution would be a landmark in the history of Chile. The proposal was met with mixed reactions. Some people supported the proposal, while others were skeptical. The proposal is expected to be discussed in the coming months.

Indian police identify suspected snipers through newspaper

Indian police identified suspected snipers through a newspaper. The police said they had received information from a newspaper about the identities of the snipers. The police are now looking for the snipers and are expected to arrest them in the coming days. The snipers were suspected of being involved in the recent violence in the region. The police are committed to bringing the snipers to justice.



A stork sits in his nest on top of an East German Trabant car which was fixed on a metal tower in the East German town of Neuruppin, about 80 km north of the German capital Berlin, April 24. Northern Germany is enjoying sunny weather conditions with temperatures of around 20 degrees Celsius (Reuters photo)

India stands at doorstep of mid-term poll

NEW DELHI (R) — India faced its third election in as many years on Saturday as last-ditch efforts to form a government appeared to reach a stalemate.

The Congress party, struggling to find allies, repeated its demand to form a minority government with outside support.

But some of those it wooed reiterated their desire for a deal allowing one of them to lead a new government.

Opinion built up in favour of early elections, although the mood indicated that neither the defeated Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nor the main opposition Congress were likely to win.

"The country is election fatigued and coalition fatigue," senior Congress leader Kamal Nath told Reuters.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who after extensive soundings remained well short of the numbers required to prove a majority in the lower house, won

some extra time on Friday from President K.R. Narayanan to try and convince reluctant groups to support a minority government.

Italian-born Gandhi on Friday submitted a list of 233 lawmakers committed to supporting her Congress, far short of the 272 needed for a majority in the 543-member lower house. She consulted colleagues on what to do next on Saturday.

"An informal meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) reiterated that the Congress should form a government of its own with the other parties supporting it from outside," party spokesman Arjun Singh said.

But the "third front" of regional, caste-oriented and leftist parties were still divided on supporting the Congress, even after helping it defeat the BJP-led coalition of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in a confidence vote last week.

"I don't see much of a

chance now," said a Congress deputy.

A ray of hope emerged when a socialist group that refused vital support to the Congress said it was willing to consider support based on specific conditions.

The 20-deputy strong Samajwadi Party, which refused to budge on Friday, said it might consider conditional backing.

Prospects of another inconclusive result did not seem to deter calls for elections.

"While such a possibility cannot be ruled out... the results of various by-elections and assembly elections held during the last one year show that the voters have become politically mature and have given a decisive verdict," the Indian Express said in an editorial.

"We are ready for elections," BJP leader J.P. Mathur told reporters, urging the president to decide soon on the next move.

"By tomorrow the president should take a decision," he said.

The option of Congress propping up a "third front" government headed by veteran Jyoti Basu of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) emerged again but the communists seemed to be in two minds on the issue.

Basu said the party's powerful politburo would meet on Sunday to decide whether to put his name forward to head a "third front" government. But party general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet said the question of a Basu-led government "does not arise."

Both said they were still trying to install a Congress government. Two groups in a five-party left front are resisting a Congress government. They have seven lawmakers between them.

Congress leaders said they saw better prospects for their party in the event of a mid-term election.

"Our chances are much better... They (BJP) are going to be in deep trouble," Kamal Nath said.

Nearly 2,000 refugees join exodus from Kosovo

GENEVA (AFP) — Nearly 2,000 have joined the more than 600,000 refugees fleeing Kosovo, while countless others wandered the mountains of Macedonia without food, water or shelter in an odyssey that left at least seven children and two old people dead, the UNHCR said here on Saturday.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that between 500 and 800 Kosovar Albanians arrived early Saturday at the border post at Blace, where several buses were waiting to shuttle them to refugee camps in Macedonia.

A further 1,000 had arrived at Blace by train Friday night, while 190 others turned up in northern Albania, said UNHCR spokeswoman Judith Kumin.

Paula Ghedini, a UNHCR spokeswoman in Skopje, confirmed that at least 250 refugees from the Kosovar town of Urosevac had arrived in Blace on buses. A trainload of refugees was expected later Saturday at the same post, she added.

Humanitarian groups including Medecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) and the U.N. agency, were finally able to distribute food and blankets to some 500 refugees in the mountain village of Malina, in Macedonia.

They had been blocked from doing so for several days, even though as many as 7,000 people were camped there in cold, snowy conditions without food in the area.

UNHCR convoys had been turned back at Macedonian checkpoints but late on Thursday, an agency team finally secured permission from the interior ministry in the Macedonian capital Skopje to bring in relief supplies.

"Some children appeared to have lost consciousness and others were too exhausted to talk or even to eat," said a UNHCR spokesman.

The refugees told aid workers that seven children and two old people died during the trek from Kosovo to Malina.

Aid groups were continu-

ing to search Saturday for thousands of refugees who left the 60-home hamlet and dispersed in the surrounding area.

The refugee agency did not have information on new arrivals to Montenegro, Serbia's partner in the rump Yugoslavia. Several hundred people continued to leave Yugoslavia on buses to Albania Friday, Kumin added.

Meanwhile, refugees continued Friday to leave Macedonia — which has said it cannot handle any more displaced people in its camps — for European countries offering temporary asylum.

The evacuations were to continue throughout the weekend.

Some 280 people were sent to Norway and Poland Friday, the UNHCR's Kumin said. Roughly 700 others were slated to leave Saturday for Austria, France, the Netherlands and Turkey.

Another 750 people were to leave Sunday for Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey.

Heat wave claims nearly 45 lives in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Nearly 45 people were feared killed in a sweeping heat wave across India, news agencies said Saturday.

Officials in the eastern state of Orissa told the United News of India that 28 heat-related deaths had been reported from 13 of the 30 districts in the eastern coastal province of Orissa over the past two weeks.

The weather office said temperatures in many parts of Orissa had touched 44 degrees Celsius on Saturday, about four degrees Celsius degrees above normal.

In another eastern state, Bihar, four people including a child died of heatstroke and more than 40 people were hospitalised, officials told the news agency. They did not indicate when the deaths occurred.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) reported 10 deaths in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, which borders Orissa. However, there was no official confirmation of the toll.

Officials told PTI that two people had died in the western state of Gujarat since Friday.

Gorbachev warns against ecological disaster in the Balkans

GENEVA (AFP) — Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev on Saturday warned of an "irreversible environmental catastrophe" in the Balkans region from NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia.

Gorbachev, who now heads the non-governmental ecological group Green Cross International, said his organisation was "expressing its strong concern with the potentially disastrous environmental impacts of the hostilities in Yugoslavia."

The destruction of oil refineries, petrochemical plants and companies producing chemical products and fertilisers poses a threat to people in the Balkans and to the environment, said Gorbachev in a statement issued by his Geneva-based group.

Gorbachev cited the destruction of a petrochemical plant at Pancevo, attacks against the town of Grocka which is close to a nuclear plant at Vinca, and the town of Baric, site of a company producing chlorine.

"An irreversible environmental catastrophe can happen any time," he said.

Gorbachev said pollution caused by the bombing campaign had begun crossing the Yugoslav border and was affecting other countries.

Green Cross International said it was ready to take part in any mission to evaluate the damage to humans and the environment once hostilities have stopped and political conditions are right.

Gorbachev was speaking five days after Russia's atomic energy ministry warned that Yugoslavia and the Balkans would face an environmental disaster if NATO bombs hit nuclear reactors in the region.

Bulat Nigmatulin, the deputy minister for atomic energy, said Monday that "military action against European territory containing several nuclear power stations is totally unacceptable."

He said there were nuclear reactors close to the Yugoslav border in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia.

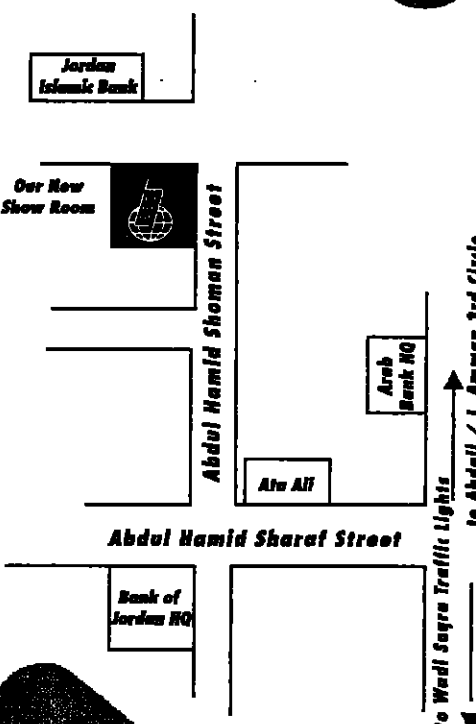
The warning came a day after NATO planes bombed a petrochemical complex northeast of Belgrade.

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Foolish decision

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's recent decision to close some Palestinian offices in the Orient House in Arab east Jerusalem can only be explained as an attempt to reverse the erosion of his political base on the eve of the May 17 elections. Netanyahu, who is lagging in opinion polls behind Labour leader Ehud Barak, is obviously doing what most desperate men tend to do — digging his own grave.

If he really is under the illusion that igniting tensions over this Palestinian office or that will help him halt the haemorrhage of votes from his camp, then, for once, we have to say we are glad of the short-sightedness of his political strategies, which will only help him lose the elections.

At this delicate internal stage, Netanyahu can no longer reasonably hope that the majority of Israelis, who want to live in true peace and security, will forgive him for yet another attempt to destroy the peace process, especially now that they are called upon to express themselves at the ballot boxes.

By providing a further proof of his policy to subjugate and humiliate the Palestinians, rather than considering them as partners and negotiate with them on an equal footing, Netanyahu is showing Israelis that by working against peace, he is working against the interests of each and every one of them.

His order to shut down at least three Palestinian offices in Orient House has already raised a chorus of protests within Israel itself, starting from the state's most senior politician, President Ezer Weizman, who said yesterday: "I don't think we should blow up such a sensitive issue as Jerusalem before knowing what government we will have after the elections."

Many Arabs felt that Labour Deputy Slomo Ben Ami aired, at least partially, their own frustration when he blasted Netanyahu's decision as "nationalistic machismo."

But, apart from internal reactions, how is Netanyahu going to legitimise his decision before the international community?

Jerusalem's Orient House has been used by the Palestinians to conduct diplomatic talks with foreign officials and diplomats for well over two decades.

The U.S. consul based in Jerusalem has been going there regularly to meet with Palestinian officials, and so have all other envoys and representatives based in the Holy City.

The U.S. administration is growing more and more impatient with Netanyahu's intransigent policies. By unilaterally freezing implementation of the October Wye River memorandum, in which U.S. President Bill Clinton had invested so much reputation and prestige both at home and abroad, Netanyahu has made sure to alienate Israel's most powerful ally.

Russia's Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has immediately criticised the decision, saying that all issues affecting Jerusalem "must be resolved through negotiations."

The EU has not made a mystery of its disagreement with the current Israeli government's policies towards the Palestinians and the Holy City. In the Berlin Declaration last month, the 15-member states have expressed the West's strongest support so far for Palestinian statehood, giving Israel one year to conclude final status negotiations. Afterwards, European officials have privately admitted that all member states are ready to grant a Palestinian state immediate recognition.

The fact remains that there are laws and treaties, that they are black on white, and cannot be retracted or ignored by any desperate candidate who fears he will not be reelected.

One of these laws says that east Jerusalem is an Arab occupied land, on which Israel has no authority whatsoever. We hope that, while going to the polls on May 17, each Israeli voter will carefully weigh the consequences of being dragged once again in a foolish war against legitimacy.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneke commented on Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh's statement on Jordan's official media, and said that it is because the leaders of these media are paralysed and do not make creative gestures that the local media hesitate and thus do not achieve their purpose, said Faneke. Media people are terrified as officials issue "odd and contradicting" orders, and when they obey and fail, they get strongly criticised, added Faneke. The writer quoted a person working in the media as saying that the late King Hussein, during a visit to media institutions, told their leaders to reduce the number of published pictures of the King and the Royal family. The information minister then understood the King's directives differently and told his assistants to increase such photos. Faneke quoted his source as saying, "The problem of the terrified media can only be solved through professionalism, as journalists must frankly express their beliefs and serve their nation's interest as they understand it and not by receiving orders from anybody, he argued. Officials at all levels must be open to media and explain the country's concerns and policies, and information ministers can reflect the government's policy with their statements and not through television and radio, which is supposed to express the people's points of view, he concluded.

On the revision of economic figures

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Faneke

The volume of gross domestic product in current prices was also subject to a material correction. The estimate for 1996 of JD5.147 million was reduced to JD4.761 million, before it was fixed at JD4.711 million, while the GDP figure for 1997, which was at one time estimated at JD5.606 mil-

THE DISCREPANCY between the actual percentage of economic growth in 1996 and the previous estimations caused an outcry in the summer of 1998, which may have been one of the reasons which toppled the government of Abdul Salam Majali, even though the discrepancy was discovered by that government, while the wrong estimate and the underlying slow-down of the economy took place before it was in office. For some reason the government of the day did not play its cards right, and the credit which was due it, turned into a scandal with resulting loss of credibility.

However, the discrepancy and variation were by no means confined to the rate of growth of gross domestic product (GDP). There are other variations and corrections that followed, of which some were direct results of the growth rate correction, while others relate to the revenue,

expenditure, and deficit of the budget.

Fortunately, consecutive Jordanian governments did not hide the mistakes. They made the facts public with a minimum of delay. Of course, the concerned governments should be held responsible for the wrong estimates, but, by the same token, they deserve credit for the disclosure of mistakes and replacing wrong figures by corrected ones, which helped the restoration of the credibility of official figures, which was damaged during the past year.

Alteration of figures relates mainly to the two years 1996 and 1997. In the area of real growth of GDP at market prices, the rate for 1996 was revised down from 5.2 per cent to 0.8 per cent. The current figure is one per cent. The growth rate for 1997 was in turn revised down from five per cent as was believed up to

January 1998 to 2.2 per cent at mid-1998, to 1.3 per cent now.

Total revenue in 1996 was revised down from JD1.503 million to JD1.431 million, while the revenue of 1997 was revised down from JD1.574 million to JD1.496 million, and became final at the level of JD1.395 million.

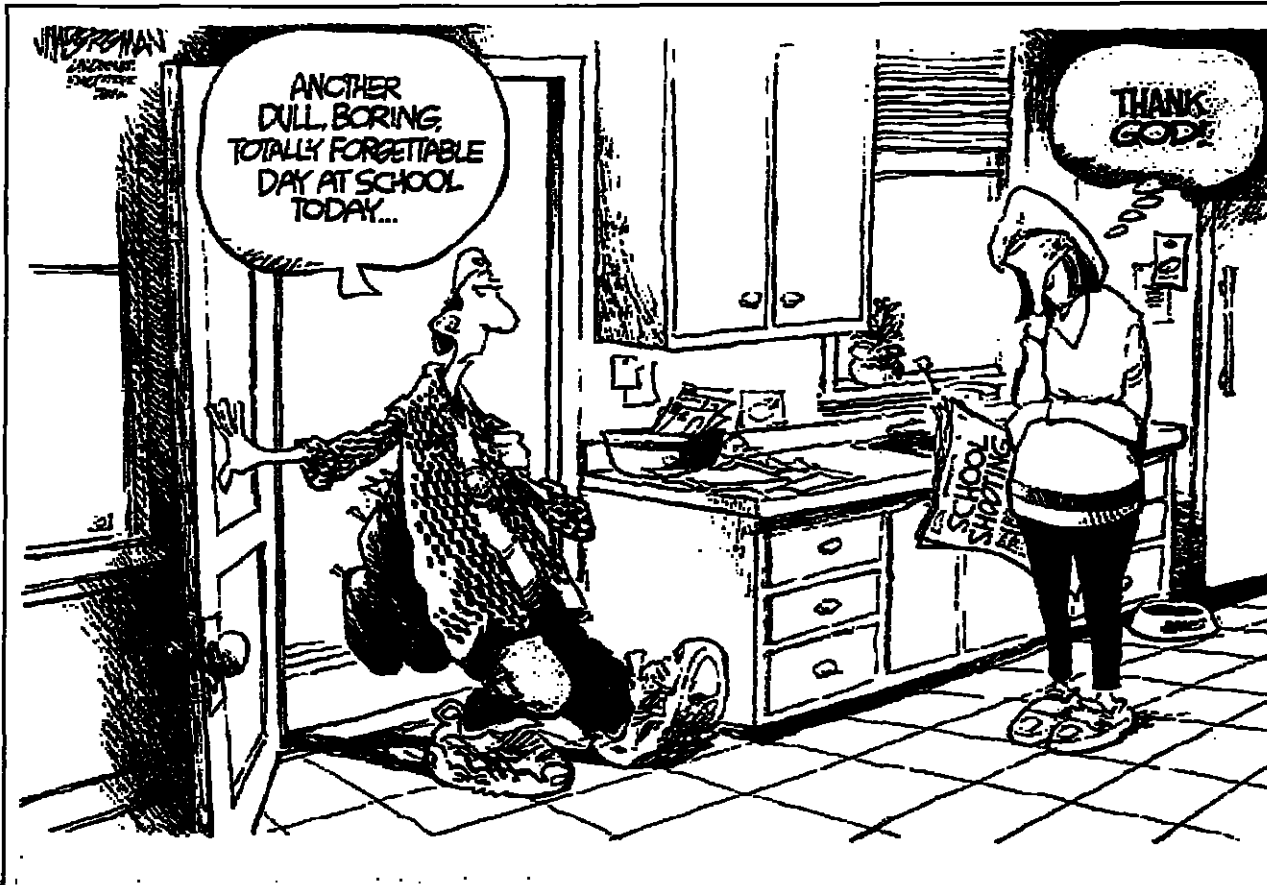
Expenditure of the budget on the other hand was revised up from JD1.741 million to JD1.799 million in 1996, and from JD1.777 million to JD1.763 million, and finally to JD1.775 million in 1997.

Thus the deficit in the budget, excluding grants, witnessed a dramatic revision. The deficit in 1996, which was supposed to be JD239 million, turned out to be JD368 million, while the deficit in 1997, which was originally estimated at JD202 million, was revised up to JD267 million, and again to JD380 million.

lion, was reduced at mid-1998 to JD4.999 million, while it is now determined to be no more than JD4.946 million.

These new revised figures were recently presented by the government to the experts from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Jordanian economic analysts, as well as businessmen, should bring their information up to date, and employ the new corrected figures in their analysis and planning.

Hopefully, Jordanian public opinion will not be misinformed once more and made to believe that it was the IMF or the World Bank who discovered the discrepancies and demanded the corrections, which was what unfortunately happened last summer. Whenever there is something new, the government should immediately make it public and not wait until others break the news.



Great deal of work still needed on Jordanian-Syrian relations

By Abdullah Hasanat

AMMAN — King Abdullah's landmark visit to Syria last week marked a turning point in bilateral ties, frosty since Amman signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

But a great deal of work needs to be completed before relations are restored to their mid-1970s level of warmth, when Jordanian and Syrian nationals used to cross their borders using identity cards only.

Bilateral relations flourished after Hafez Assad took over as Syria's strong man in 1970's after his intervention then as airforce commander to end Syria's attempted armoured invasion of Jordan when the Jordanian army clashed with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation.

But the honeymoon lasted for a decade before the two countries separated after Syria sided with Iran in its 1980-1988 war with Iraq while Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf countries backed Baghdad.

The rift deepened after Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, ending a 46-year state of war with the Jewish state.

Following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the U.S. assembled the Middle East peace conference in Madrid, heading Arabs and Israelis to the negotiating table. The Palestinians, the Jordanians and the Syrians went to the negotiations at the same time and were able to reach different deals with the then Labour-led Israeli government of Yitzhak Rabin. The Palestinians signed the Oslo accords, the Jordanian a peace treaty and the Syrians reached an unwritten understanding on total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for full peace.

However, the process received two fatal blows, the assassination of Rabin in 1995 and the election of hardline Likud leader Benyamin Netanyahu in 1996.

Jordanian-Syrian ties were also strained by Jordan's stand in support of Arafat in his peace talks with Israel as the Palestinian leader remains a persona non grata in Damascus.

Jordan wants Syria to recognise that "as Lebanon is Syria's soft belly, Palestine is ours," according to a senior Jordanian official. "We would like to see the fertile crescent (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine) harmonise its policies in the face of dangers from the west (Israel) and from the east (Iraq)," he

said. But two decades of strained political Syrian-Jordanian relations also reflected negatively on trade exchanges and on social interaction between the two peoples.

Therefore, the task of making amends between the two countries and peoples is awesome.

While traditional Syrian leaders would like to see Jordan become a satellite in Damascus' sphere of political influence, Jordan wants a relationship based on recognition that each country has its characteristics and its own way of handling its relations with its neighbours as dictated by its own national interests.

Jordanian leaders say they want the relationship to be built on the concept of strengthening present positive elements while discussing the negative aspects in an atmosphere of frankness and trust.

While the question of Iraq, the peace process, relations with Turkey and Iran are complex issues that need extensive discussions, matters like trade, water sharing and cultural cooperation are far less complicated and can be used as vehicles to improving ties.

The fate of Iraq will reflect positively or negatively on both countries almost equally, according to a senior Jordanian official. Whether Iraqi President Saddam Hussein remains in power or is replaced or whether Iraq disintegrates or stays intact will have repercussions for all its neighbours.

Arafat's failure or success in forcing Israel to recognise Palestinian rights will decide the fate of the whole peace process, a process that Jordan strongly believes is vital for the stability of the region and the well-being of its peoples.

Equally important, according to Jordanian officials, are ties with Iran and Turkey, the two powerful Shiite and Sunni Muslim states of the Near East.

But what seems to be hitting Jordanian, Syrian and all other Arab leaders now is the fact that their three decades of quarrel have left them much vulnerable to the dictates of the West and the designs of Israel.

"The region is in turmoil," says a Jordanian official. "A minimum Arab stand is required and a minimum stand requires improved ties." Agreeing on Al Wihdah Dam, which provides Syria and Jordan with additional water supplies is bound to improve ties, say Jordanian officials. "At the moment most of the Yarmouk waters go to the Dead Sea or are

'Jordan wants a relationship based on recognition that each country has its characteristics and its own way of handling its relations with its neighbours'

being tapped by Israel which according to the peace treaty, is only entitled to get 25 million cubic metres," says one senior Jordanian official.

Trade with Syria is another aspect of bilateral ties that Jordan wants to explore. Though exchanges are meagre, the balance of trade remains in favour of Syria.

"We want improved trade exchanges because we believe this leads to improved political ties," says the official. "Political differences in any case should not stand in the way of trade and cultural ties."

Another thorny issue is that of Jordanian prisoners still held in Syrian jails. Jordan has a list of over 400 prisoners that it says are not all convicted criminals. The Jordanian government is under pressure from the families of prisoners and from political parties and activists to win their release.

Therefore, the future of the relationship in the immediate future will depend on steps taken by the two countries to solve the easy problems. In the long run, however, the future relies on who assumes power in Damascus after Hafez Assad. "If the old guard take over, relations with Jordan will be put on the backburner," says a political analyst. "If Bashar takes over from his father, relations will see rapid improvement considering that King Abdullah and Bashar, both trained in Britain, see eye-to-eye on many issues pertaining to the future of the region." The King and Jordanian officials are not shy to praise Bashar and to court him.

Compassion and hypocrisy

By Pascal Karmy

WE STILL remember the thousands of Palestinians who were forced to leave Ramleh and Lydda by the Israeli army and walked from there to Ramallah. We still remember the exodus of Palestinians from their homes after the Deir Yassin massacre on April 9, 1948. They camped under the trees and slept there for days and nights under the open air until they reached the Jordanian, Syrian or Lebanese borders.

Hundreds of old men, women and children died on the way to those countries out of fatigue, hunger or thirst. The present sight of Albanian Kosovar refugees conjures up those same images of Palestinian refugees in 1948.

The Arab states, namely Jordan, Iraq and Syria came to the rescue of the Palestinians only after May 15, 1948 but to no avail: the majority of Palestinian territory had already been occupied by the Jewish forces and there were already thousands of refugees living in exile in makeshift tents. In defiance of the United Nations sponsored ceasefires of 1949, the Israeli forces occupied strategic parts of Palestine such as Um Rashrash village where they founded the port of Eilat.

The world, especially the Western world, condoned the Jewish actions and accepted the fait accompli: the replacement of the Palestinian homeland by a Jewish homeland. Thus, the Serbs are simply emulating what the Jews did to the Palestinians in 1948 and 1949. They are killing and expelling the Kosovars and replacing them by the Serbs. Since the Jews succeeded in putting before the world a fait accompli, the Serbs are trying to do the same.

It is heart rending to see the thousands of Kosovar Albanians being expelled from their homes. Television is showing us the cruelty of human beings to one another, now, on the steps of the 21st century. Has human nature changed for the better or for the worse?

Israel is acting hypocritically: It has shown compassion towards the fate of Albanian Kosovars while its hands are stained with Palestinian blood. Suffice it to mention some of the massacres which the Israelis committed in Deir Yassin, Qafz Qassem, Eamunna, Yalu and Qibya in Palestine and indirectly Sabra and Shatilla in Beirut. In other words, the Israelis effectively carried out an ethnic cleansing of the Arabs of Palestine. Some have even blatantly and unashamedly said that it was necessary for Israel to commit the massacre of Deir Yassin which inspired fear and panic in the hearts of Palestinians who had to flee their homes. Israel, which has welcomed a few thousands Albanian Kosovar refugees, should instead have allowed the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees living in camps in the Arab countries to return to their own homes in Palestine. Israel, which destroyed hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages and expelled their inhabitants cannot be really compassionate to others. This is not compassion but hypocrisy.

It is only right that the international community should not allow the Serbs to continue with their cruel expulsion of the Albanian Kosovars as Israel did with the Palestinians.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and, for many years, legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna.

Letters to the Editor

Cooperation and water

I'M VERY pleased that Israel and Jordan have resolved their problem regarding water sharing. However, it is clear that close cooperation will be required in the future to ensure adequate water for all of us.

I feel that my government did not handle the proposed cut-back properly, and there is no question that Israel should live up to its commitment to Jordan under the terms of the 1994 treaty — needless ill-will was fostered.

Nevertheless, we all must be cognizant of the fact that we live in an arid region, and your figure of a Jordanian population of over 8 million in the year 2020 (with a commensurate population increase in Israel) dictates adoption of flexible policies designed to cope with yearly fluctuations in the water table level.

This is one area in which peaceful cooperation will bring clear and evident benefits to all — rich and poor, Arab and Jew alike.

Gershon Schneidersohn
 Tel Aviv

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers. Letters should be addressed to the Editor, Jordan Times, P.O. Box 6710, Amman. The writer's name and address should be given. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and brevity.

Features

Soldier pasts stop Netanyahu and Barak mudslinging

By Deborah Sontag

ON THE wall behind his desk, Ehud Barak, the Labour Party's candidate for prime minister, keeps an old photograph of himself disguised in a mechanic's white coveralls, descending on the gangway of a Sabena Airlines jet.

In 1976, posing as a member of the flight crew, Barak, a highly decorated former general, had just commanded the successful storming of the plane, which had been hijacked by Palestinian terrorists.

Somewhere outside the range of the picture stood Benjamin Netanyahu, then one of the lieutenants in Barak's small elite force, now prime minister and Barak's chief rival for the top post in Israel.

That the episode figures prominently in both of their political biographies underscores how very small the power elite is in this country of 6 million people. Personal or intimate professional connections between leaders often predate their political antagonisms.

In this case the relationship between Barak and Netanyahu — that of a former commander and his lieutenant — and between their families may be preventing an otherwise bruising campaign from descending into a quagmire of mudslinging.

The links may have prescribed natural limits based on some degree of mutual respect and shared history between the two candidates.

Or the civility could arise from polls indicating that personal attacks delivered by the candidates do not work.

Either way, a campaign that was expected to focus exclusively on character — and specifically on Netanyahu's perceived flaws as a

leader — has more content than most Israeli political analysts give it credit for.

Ideologically, it turns on the very different attitudes towards peacemaking of Netanyahu and Barak, the leading contenders in a five-way race for prime minister.

On May 17, Israelis will cast two ballots — one for a member of parliament and the other for prime minister.

The storming of the Sabena airliner was a formative experience for both men, one of several defining encounters with terrorism. But they drew radically different conclusions from their experiences, shaping their very dissimilar perceptions of Israel's strength and stability in a volatile Middle East.

While the public debate has been superficial, each candidate has in recent interviews fully expressed an attitude towards peace that grows from divergent vision of Israel at its age of 51.

Netanyahu described a country that must still be on guard against those who want to destroy the Jewish homeland. Barak saw a country strong as "a kind of a benign killer whale" in a "tough neighbourhood."

Personally each man, and especially Barak, spoke of the other without the vehemence voiced by their campaigns.

Although Netanyahu described his opponents on the left as consumed by a "great deal of antipathy, if not hatred," for him, he did not ascribe responsibility to Barak but rather to the Labour Party.

Barak sounded relatively gracious, if condescending, in describing the prime minister — even if he did conclude by referring to Netanyahu with a withering simile.

"Bibi's not a bad man," Barak said,



Barak on Netanyahu: 'I think of him as a high-quality mechanical watch with one small wheel turning the wrong way'

using Netanyahu's nickname.

"He's not a kind of superficial as his political opponents from Likud or our side try to make him. He's focused. He's systematic. He's well intentioned. He's not trying to destroy anything deliberately."

"He's trying to do the right things for Israel."

And then the simile: "I think of him as a high-quality mechanical watch with one small wheel turning the wrong way."

Nearly 25 years ago, Netanyahu, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Barak, a graduate student at Stanford University, flew back together from the United

States to fight in the 1973 war. Three years later, in an episode devastating to both of them, Netanyahu's older brother, Yonatan, a commando, was killed in the airborne raid to free hostages in Entebbe, Uganda.

Netanyahu and his brother were very close. Barak and Yonatan Netanyahu, who once served as his military deputy, were dear friends who lived in the same apartment complex. Barak's wife, Nava, broke the news to Yonatan's girlfriend that he had been killed. And on the anniversary of the Entebbe raid, Barak and Netanyahu both faithfully visit Yonatan's grave on Mount Herzl.

Netanyahu and Barak have been

running neck and neck, with Barak a couple of percentage points ahead recently. Another former general inside the intimate circle of opponents, Yitzhak Mordechai, the Centre Party candidate, has been trailing them. He was a defence minister under Netanyahu and a commander under Barak.

"With all of these Centre Party guys," Barak said, referring to Mordechai and the three other leaders, "I go back so far I knew their wives before they did."

In private conversations the prime minister has spoken of Barak with a kind of chilly admiration, referring to him as a man of substance who, like himself, has complex, often prickly relationships with associates.

During the interview, Netanyahu neither sang Barak's praises nor assailed him personally. He offered his public criticism — that Barak, at heart a leftist, would "fold" before Palestinians' demands.

Barak hardly sounds like a leftist to outsiders. He calls the West Bank by its biblical — and military — name, Judea and Samaria. He talks not of integration with the Palestinians but of a "physical separation" from them. And he says it pains him to think of conceding land to the Palestinians or the Syrians, which would be decisions made with his head, not his heart.

But unlike Netanyahu, he does not see Israel as in danger, and that makes a world of political difference.

To Netanyahu, Israel may be close to becoming an economic "miracle" but remains vulnerable. Too many concessions in the name of making peace could create what he says the Palestinians want: "a reduced Israel that is largely indefensible, huddled on a fragile coastline with a Palestinian

stare on the mountains above holding an Iraqi or Iranian umbrella."

To Barak, Israel has emerged as "the strongest country in a thousand miles."

"We have to get rid of this ghetto anxiety," he said, "that we are still surrounded by demons. We are surrounded by rivals that are taking care of their business and we are taking care of ours. We are stronger already, but we would be stronger still if we were united and we did not control the Arabs."

Netanyahu scorns the idea that a Western-style peace can be forged between Israel and its neighbours — a peace built on "goodwill and concessions."

Concessions to dictators or undemocratic governments are seen as "signs of weakness and stimuli for additional aggression against you," he said. He wants Israel's security to come first, and mocks the many "grand ceremonies on manicured lawns" that have accompanied treaty signings.

Netanyahu has long advocated "peace with security." He insists that the Palestinians clamp down more systematically not only on terrorism but also on anti-Israeli propaganda before Israel turns over any more land in the West Bank. He says that peace should be made slowly so that it can last.

"The other way, it's faster, but you wake up not with a hangover but with a potential catastrophe," he has said.

Barak, however, believes that the prime minister is holding the bar too high. He jokes that Netanyahu wants all of Israel's Arab neighbours to convert to "Jeffersonian democracies" before he will consider making peace.

— The International Herald Tribune

'Islamic feminism': The perils of false terminology

In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey
By Elizabeth Warnock Fernea
New York, Doubleday, 1998
430 pages
\$24.95 (hardback)

THE TITLE of this book is intriguing, but it also denotes a problem that the author fails to resolve. Elizabeth Fernea travelled to seven Muslim-majority countries: Uzbekistan, Morocco, Kuwait, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, in addition to Israel/Palestine. But only upon returning to the U.S. did she find a substantial number of Muslim women ready to discuss women's issues in terms of "Islamic feminism." Obviously, these women had familiarised themselves with the term while finding their niche in American society, as immigrants and/or members of a minority religion.

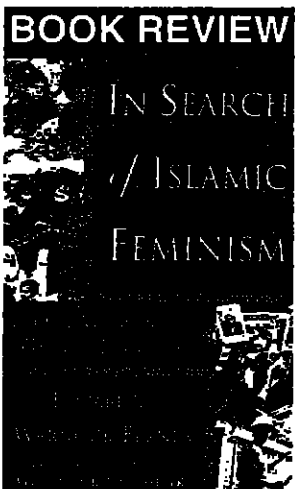
Not so with the women in Uzbekistan, who found the term totally irrelevant. They saw no connection between their religion and the problems they face, such as poverty and malnutrition. Similarly, in Morocco, Fernea found women debating the new family law and working in various ways for equality, but none who defined themselves as "Islamic feminists." In country after country, women objected to this term as an import from the West. Alternately, some felt it referred only to Islamist women engaged in reinterpreting the Koran in favour of women's rights.

In Kuwait, although the question of women's voting rights had been put on ice,

Ferne found women quietly working to augment their role in public life. One of them, international lawyer Bedriya Awadhi, explained why many Middle Eastern women are wary of the term feminism: "The West is fond of touting itself as improving women's rights. They have done that, more or less, but they have neglected the family. It's interesting that only 32 out of 188 countries have ratified the international TLO convention on equality within the family. And the United States is not one of them" (p. 193).

On the other hand, in Egypt, Iqbal Baraka, editor of the women's magazine, Hawa, did not object to the term feminism, but she raised a similar point: "Oriental feminism is not like Western feminism, which I think is only interested in the individual woman... our demands are different... We need more social freedom, more equality within our families" (pp. 246-7).

These and similar arguments did lead Fernea to question her own ideas, but she never makes a real reevaluation. Unfortunately, her insistence on the term "Islamic feminism" often got in the way of meaningful discussions with the women she met, and precluded a coherent analysis. Perhaps she should have listened to the young, U.S.-educated, Kuwaiti woman who told her that in America, she had learned to avoid stereotyping. Even as a Muslim who considered herself a feminist, she resented being labelled as an "Islamic feminist." Though Fernea may have intended to tell about Arab women in a way that would dispel prevailing stereotypes,



she sticks to the "Islamic feminist" terminology that is itself perilously close to such stereotypes.

Ferne teaches Middle East studies at the University of Texas in Austin. She has lived and travelled in the Middle East for extensive periods of time, producing several excellent books and films on the area. In this book, she covers many interesting things: the first women's library in Turkey, the first Arab Woman's Book Fair in Cairo, a centre for victims of violence — both domestic abuse and war — in Cairo, a variety of self-help projects to benefit women, and how the great advances made by Iraqi women since she herself lived there in the late 50s, have subsequently been eroded by war and economic sanctions. With her extensive contacts and knowledge, this could have been a much better book had Fernea not spent so much time toying with the term "Islamic feminism," long after it proved to be a non-starter with the very women she was trying to write about.

Sally Bland

The murderous consequences of identity

Amin Maalouf, "Les Identités meurtrières," Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1998
211 pages

THERE ARE some books which one cannot put down until one has turned the last page.

One such book is Amin Maalouf's latest work, "Les Identités meurtrières" (Murderous Identities), published in French. Not only because it is so relevant to what is going on today in the form of "ethnic cleansing" in Europe, and other forms of violence elsewhere, but also because it is a book, which, amidst our hectic, modern, violent, globalised world contains a voice that is neither cynical, nor sceptical, neither resigned nor pessimistic. On the contrary, it is a voice which tries to show us a way out, in spite of the apparent insurmountability of the problems facing us at the end of this century. And it does so in the tradition of the enlightened humanist thinkers.

Unlike most of his other works, which are historical novels, (Maalouf received the prestigious French "Prix Goncourt" in 1993), "Les Identités meurtrières" is written in the form of an extended essay of 211 pages.

The book examines the notion of identity, the notion of globalisation and modernity, and their effect on the identity of different cultures.

He asks: Will societies be subjected indefinitely to social, ethnic and religious tensions and violence, only because people do not have the same religion, colour of skin or cultural origin?

Maalouf's book deals with a subject which — in view of what is happening to the Albanian population of Kosovo this very minute on our TV screens and in view of what has happened to others before them in other parts of the world, including our own region — is very important to understand.

"Murderous Identities" tries to explain why perfectly normal

human beings can suddenly turn into crazed mass killers and undertake mass expulsions, turning against their neighbours, in the name of their religious, national, ethnic or any other identity. Considering also how often this is happening (Rwanda), Maalouf asks whether this is a phenomenon specific to our own age, or whether it has been so since time immemorial.

He starts his book by describing how, since having settled in France in 1976 after having left his ancestral Lebanon, people always ask him with the best of intentions whether he felt "more French" or "more Lebanese." Not being satisfied with his answer of "both" the questioner usually insists, "but deep down, how do you really feel?" This used to make Maalouf smile. But not any more. For this question reveals a wide-spread and dangerous concept of man, namely that everybody "deep down" has only one sense of belonging, an essential one, determined once and for all at birth. But the truth is the opposite, says Maalouf. First, man's identity is made up of multiple elements and multiple affinities, be they religious, national, linguistic, ethnic, professional, tribal and so on. Second, identities are not fixed and static. People do not acquire them at birth in one step, but they develop during the course of one's life. Forcing people to come forth and state only one "basic" identity is how we "produce" people who commit mass murder in the name of their "one" identity, Maalouf writes.

To make his point Maalouf cites the example of a 50-year-old man in the street of Sarajevo, in an imaginary questionnaire. In 1980, this man would have proclaimed with pride "I am a Yugoslav." Asked some years later he would say: "I live in the Federal Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina" and add that he comes from a Muslim family. Twelve years later, in the midst of an atrocious war, the same man would reply "I am a Muslim" and then add that he is also Bosnian. Today he would say

that he is a Bosnian, then Muslim and add that he hopes to become European by joining the European Union. Maalouf adds that this man, who was born into a Muslim family, belongs linguistically to the Southern Slavs, who hardly ever were united into one country, and who actually live in an area that at one time was Austrian, at another Ottoman. During the course of his life he was told all sorts of fables: that he was proletarian and nothing else; Yugoslav, and nothing else; more recently Muslim and nothing else; and sometimes he was told that he had more in common with the men in Kabul than with those in Trieste. We all know too well what happened then...

After every new massacre in the world, we ask ourselves, how can human beings commit such atrocities? We try to explain this by speaking of a murderous craze. In fact, this craze, according to Maalouf, is the propensity of our fellow men to change into mass killers when they believe that the "tribe" to which they belong is threatened. Any human community which feels threatened, humiliated or alienated has the tendency to close up and produce extremists who are ready to become mass killers.

Maalouf poses the question: How can we prevent the conditions that enable such monsters to appear? And comes to the conclusion, that amongst other things, we first have to change our notion of identity: For what makes it easy for extremists to impose themselves as "defenders of one absolute identity" is the fact that the "tribal" concept of identity still prevails everywhere. It is a concept inherited from past conflicts, which most people would reject if examined closer, but to which most people still cling to out of habit or out of a lack of imagination, thus, unintentionally contributing to the dramas of the future by which we will be truly shaken.

In Maalouf's view our era of globalisation is forcing us to

BOOK REVIEW

AMIN MAALOUF

Les identités meurtrières



GRASSET

establish a new concept of identity, a new concept of viewing our fellow man. He believes our contemporaries have to be encouraged to assume their multiple belongings, to reconcile their need for an identity with an open and simple attitude towards other cultures, and lastly to not having to choose between either negating themselves or negating the "other." This is the only way to realise the concept of a peaceful "global village," rather than heading towards a "clash of civilisations."

The new concept of identity has to be perceived as the sum of all our different affinities, the centre of which is our belonging to the human community, which would become more and more important, until one day it would be the principal one. Thus the new concept of identity has to pre-suppose that there are values which apply to all human beings without distinction. And without double standards, one might add.

Maalouf's "Murderous Identities" is a thought provoking book, disquieting but also full of hope and wisdom.

Nadia Abdulhadi-Sukhtian

Arab film-makers struggle to survive

By Henry Meyer
Agence France Presse

RESTRICTED BY censorship at home, starved of resources and rarely able to reach large audiences, the Arab World's new generation of film-makers is struggling to survive.

At a festival of independent Arab films just held in the British capital — a rare chance to showcase their work — directors said their hopes for a renaissance in the Arab film industry rested on tapping into Western funds.

But only a handful of projects are accepted by U.S. and European produc-

tion companies, and these foreign-produced documentaries and films are often not screened in the directors' home countries for political reasons.

Mohammed Malas, a Syrian film director who submitted a short film at the festival about political prisoners, "On the Sand, Under the Sun," said the French co-production was unlikely to be seen by viewers in Syria.

"Until now, the film has not been banned, but it has not been broadcast in Syria," he said.

Another film, by Egyptian film-maker Tahani Rached, won the prize for best documentary at the London festival for

its inspiring portrayal of a friendship between four women from diametrically opposed secular and Islamist backgrounds.

But it too, produced and financed by the Canadian Film Board, was denied access to all but a tiny audience in the director's home country.

"There was a premiere of the film in Egypt, but it was of course not broadcast on television, that would be too much," said Rached, who has lived and worked in Montreal for many years.

"To discuss religion in this way is totally unheard of for national television," she explained.

But these two film-makers can count themselves lucky to have obtained the financing to produce projects with adequate technical resources and creative freedom.

Those Arab film-makers who try to escape the censors' scissors by getting funds from abroad, or even emigrating, find that another problem rears its head: their ideas are often not seen as marketable by the Western film industry.

Nasser Bakhti, an Algerian film producer now living in Switzerland, complained that he was able to get the money to make a documentary about a Swiss writer but a project about Mus-

lims in Bosnia was turned down.

"They won't finance films about Arab issues," he said.

The London festival's organiser, Mohammed Maklouf, said that the situation often forced film-makers to produce their ideas on a shoe-string budget, with the knowledge that they would never be seen.

"There is a frustration among these Arab film-makers, because these films, they don't show them in the cinemas, and they don't show them on television," either in the Arab World or the West, he said.

But there are some seeds of hope —

paradoxically because of the censorship and political repression across Arab countries, which tends to unleash creative energy.

"The experience I see around me in the Arab World has an extremely positive side," commented Mohammed Malas, who says he has managed during his career to produce films in Syria using a hidden language.

"In Iranian cinema, because of the bans and the censorship, the cineasts have done a formidable job of developing cinematic language and aesthetics, and have produced a cinema of an extraordinarily high level," he said.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus said yesterday he was worried that increasing trade imbalances between the dollar, yen and euro areas could destabilise the world economy.

"We see as an element of risk and instability the growing imbalances in the current accounts of the major currency blocs" covered by the dollar, the yen and the euro, Camdessus told a press conference.

That is why the International Monetary Fund (IMF) believes that after eight years of "superb" growth it is time for the U.S. economy to slow down somewhat and head for a "soft landing," Camdessus added. At the same time, it is "more than time" for European economies "to do everything to stimulate growth a vigorous effort for flexibility and structural change, particularly in the labour market," the IMF chief

As prices for Kuwaiti
crudes earlier fell by more
than \$10 a barrel to under
\$57, the government told citi-
zens to prepare for tough
times. In February, they
rose to 2.056 billion
dinars from 1.986 billion
dinars the previous month
and compared with 2.133 in
February, 1998.

It particularly stressed that the

The review — which was conducted before the European Central Bank cut interest rates by 50 basis points on April 8 to 2.5 per cent from 3.0 per cent — also said that rate cuts would probably be necessary given “uncertainties” about the strength of the area’s economic

But in its World Economic Outlook report the IMF warned that the U.S. economy, which accounted for half of global economic growth last year, needs to slow down and that the euro zone economies need to pick up the baton as Japan struggles to pull out of recession.

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	BRITISH POUND STERLING	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GILDER	ITALY LIRE	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.0564	0.5437	0.5631	0.151	0.0074	0.0017	0.0001	
BRITISH POUND STERLING	0.9229	1.0000	0.3864	0.4132	0.1309	0.0059	0.0012	0.0001	
GERMAN MARK	1.8331	2.5847	1.0000	1.0208	0.2928	0.1701	0.0018	0.0001	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.7506	4.7232	0.9191	1.0000	0.2442	0.1225	0.0017	0.0001	
FRANCE FRANC	6.5896	9.9091	3.3537	4.0943	1.0000	0.1735	0.0019	0.0001	
JAPAN YEN	120.200	191.213	88.344	79.8354	5.4991	1.0000	0.0044	0.0001	
HOLLAND GILDER	2.0723	2.3238	1.1267	0.7575	0.3359	0.2209	1.0000	0.0001	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	8.3105	11.4552	4.5839	5.5995	1.2675	0.3638	0.2472	0.0001	
ITALY LIRA	1.8208	29.2508	9.9999	12.295	2.9213	0.1538	0.0001	0.0001	
BRITISH POUND STERLING	3.7972	50.9422	22.8258	25.8275	6.1507	3.1405	0.0001	0.0001	
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	0.5424	0.4825	0.8422	0.6257	0.2505	0.2042	0.0001	0.0001	
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	0.3744	0.3367	0.6795	0.2426	0.0994	0.1610	0.0001	0.0001	
SPAIN PESSETA	0.0337	0.0028	0.0022	0.0034	0.0017	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	
INDONESIA RUPIAH	12.2877	22.7863	3.9911	8.9887	12.7546	6.2444	0.0001	0.0001	
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	0.4865	0.3911	0.8530	0.6984	0.2817	0.1463	0.0001	0.0001	
CANADA DOLLAR	0.7483	0.5171	1.0112	0.8241	1.0574	0.6103	0.0001	0.0001	

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR					
CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN					
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES					
DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES		CBJA			
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR	
US DOLLAR	4.5000	4.6000	4.7000	5.0000	
GB BRITAIN STERLING	1.3000	1.1000	1.0000	1.0000	
EURO	3.5000	2.0000	2.0000	2.9000	
GERMANY MARK	0.2000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.1000	1.1000	1.2000	1.3000	
JAPAN YEN	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	

WORLD STOCK MARKETS					PRECIOUS METALS		
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE			
FRANKFURT	DAI	5'43.29	5'087.29	76.90			
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	2'543.70	2'408.78	134.90			
LONDON	FT-400	6'514.40	6'514.40	0.00			
NEW YORK	DJ INDICES	2'568.12	2'548.52	19.60			
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	833.71	822.54	11.17			
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	750.58	736.98	13.60			
NEW YORK	S&P 500	138.72	136.97	1.75			
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	10,408.25	10,408.25	0.00			
PARIS	CAC 40	658.85	650.25	8.60			
					METAL	ASP	SD
					GOLD	260.00	233.00
					SILVER	17.50	16.50
					PLATINUM	200.00	190.00

Since its opening three years ago, Champions has been one of *Azman's* most popular nightspots. Champions is a chain of Sports Bars featured only in Marriott Hotels around the world. There are over 13 branches in the United States and 10 branches in the rest of the world.

The attractions of the showroom are many. A visitor to this showroom can get to see the latest FD Trinitron Wega flat televisions from Sony. Wega TVs are the world's only truly flat TV and gives unparalleled picture quality. The FD Trinitron Wega has revolutionised the reproduction of image and sound and has become the bench mark for high quality televisions.

DOWN	34	Inking	43	Hanging	52	vehicles
1 Point a finger	35	Menu plan	44	ornament	53	Animal displays
2 Stirs to anger	36	Hoover or	44	"Do ... others	53	"It ... It City"
3 Map within a	37	Hoover or	45	as ...	54	Astronauts' grp.
4 map	38	Grand Coulee	46	Kind of ginger	55	Penry's penner
5 Stench	39	End one stop	47	Across Wazlee	57	Most on the
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GR-R-R ARF

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Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Housing Bank distributing dividends to shareholders at a rate of 15 per cent

THE HOUSING Bank is distributing dividends to shareholders at a rate of 15 per cent following the endorsement of the 1998 financial accounts by the general assembly. According to the balance at the end of last year, the bank posted a JD31.8 million net profit before tax, 60 per cent higher than the JD20 million recorded at the end of 1997.

The balance sheet totalled JD1.418 billion at the end of 1998, an increase of five per cent over the JD1.351 billion total at the end of 1997. Shareholders equity registered a 4.5 per cent rise as it reached JD221.9 million. The financial statement at the end of 1998 also showed that deposits totalled JD1.056 billion compared to JD987.9 million at the end of 1997.

The bank boasted holding savings accounts the amount of which exceeds the overall total of savings at all banks by JD25.4 million. "As such, the saving deposits at the (Housing) bank represent 108.9 per cent of saving deposits held by all the banks combined," the bank's annual report said.

The report also highlighted that the number of Visa Cards issued by the bank accounted for 37 per cent of the total number of Visa Cards issued by banks in Jordan.

The last financial figure outlined by the bank in the report was the JD2.46 billion being the total loans and credits extended and outstanding at the end of 1998 (Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i).

Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan) boosts operational profit by 39%, net profit by 9%

THE ARAB Banking Corporation (Jordan) boosted its operational profit by 38 per cent from JD2.6 million to around JD3.6 million and its net profit by nine per cent from JD1.98 million to JD2.2 million at the end of 1998 but the general assembly approved the financial accounts of last year and, as recommended by the board of directors, decided not to distribute dividends to shareholders. The decision was taken "to boost and consolidate the capital base of the bank in order to optimise its capabilities and enable it provide financing to large institutions that usually require large amounts and long periods."

According to the annual report, the operational earnings totalled around JD6.8 million last year compared to about JD5.6 million, a 21 per cent increase that is more than double the rate of 10 per cent in 1997. "Earnings from non-credit operations amounted to JD1.7 million, 31 per cent more than JD1.3 million earned in 1997," the report said stressing that the bank's policy at present is to bolster this type of income from investments that does not depend on income from credit facilities. Board

Chairman Abdul Wahab Al Tamar told the shareholders that customer deposits at the end of 1998 totalled around JD158 million, nine per cent higher than the JD145 million total at the end of 1997. Net direct credits grew by 13 per cent from JD100.7 million to JD113.8 million, he indicated noting that the rate of growth in the banking sector as a whole was 6.5 per cent. Al Tamar boasted the growth in foreign currency deposits as a "remarkable achievement" pointing out in this regard that the total rose by 39 per cent from the equivalent of JD36 million to the equivalent of JD50 million.

The chairman concluded by assuring the shareholders that the net profit could have been much better had it not been for the allocations that the Central Bank requested for "some good credits." He said higher profit will be attained in future years when a good portion of the allocations is retrieved at a later stage. Total assets at the end of 1998 stood at JD239.5 million compared to JD211.9 million at the end of 1997 (Al Dustour + Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i + Al Arab Al Yawm).

World Bank to guarantee private loans

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The World Bank has announced a new scheme to help developing countries raise money on private capital markets, providing they follow Bank economic reform prescriptions.

The bank is offering to guarantee a part of loans raised by such countries on the private capital markets, it said in a statement.

The guarantees "are expected to play a catalytic role in helping bank borrowers with strong economic and social programmes improve their access to private foreign financing," the statement said.

The World Bank already provides guarantees for money borrowed by governments for projects linked to structural and social reform, but the new facility would partially guarantee funds raised on the private capital market such as bond issues.

But such guarantees would only be available to governments carrying out World Bank-approved "structural, institutional and social policies and reforms."

The bank said it would be starting a pilot programme with \$2 billion available in credit guarantees, but that for the moment no particular countries were requesting such assistance.

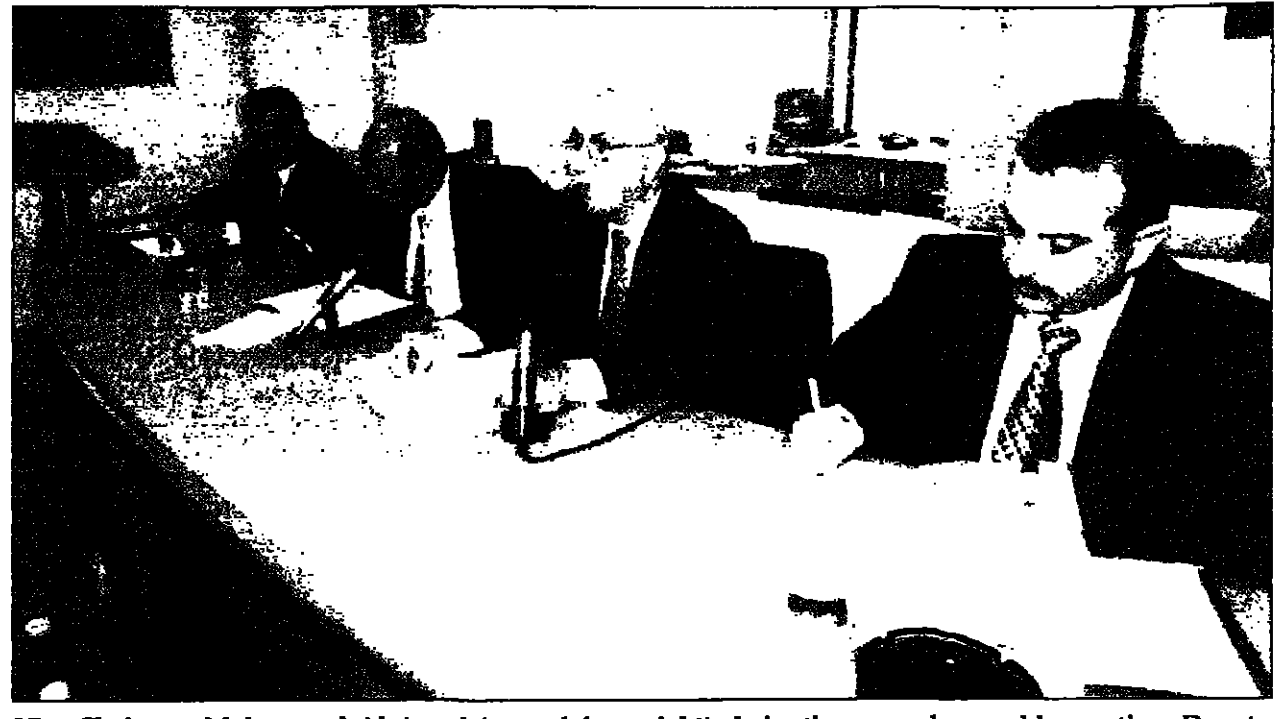
The new scheme is part of bank efforts to encourage developing countries to obtain greater access to private sources of capital, and in particular to enable countries which have difficulty in attracting private capital to have access to such flows.

Meanwhile, the World Bank's private sector investment arm, IFC, has invested \$1.6 billion dollars in 60 companies in crisis-hit Asian countries since mid-1997, a senior IFC official has said.

Much of the investment has been to help companies restructure to be able to become competitive and continue to operate. International Finance Corporation (IFC) director for East Asia and the Pacific, Javed Hamid told a news conference.

Much of the investment has been in South Korea, which "seems to be coming out of the crisis; their stock market has gone up quite dramatically," Hamid said.

The IFC has invested \$540 million in 20 South Korean companies over 18 months, partly reflecting the speed with which South Korea has pushed ahead with reform, particularly by accepting the need for companies to restructure or go bankrupt, Hamid said.



Vice Chairman Mohammad Al Amad (second from right) chairs the general assembly meeting. Deputy General Manager Nader Hourani (right) is recording minutes of the meeting (Al Ra'i photo)

Jordan Press Foundation Company (Al Ra'i) to distribute dividends at a rate of 60%

AMMAN (J.T.) — The general assembly of the Jordan Press Foundation Company, Al Ra'i has endorsed the 1998 financial report which showed a pretax net profit of JD 2.61 million.

The general assembly convened Thursday under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman Mohammad Al Amad who said that the improvement in the financial situation was due to the stable financial policy pursued by the company and to the higher return from interest on the deposits at banks in addition to

higher earnings from sales and advertisements.

The stability of prices of printing paper and other materials contributed to the results achieved in the 1998 operations, he said.

The financial position was strengthened last year by the JD1 million increase in capital to JD3 million and the abundant inventory of paper and other materials needed to publish Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times for an adequate period.

After examining the report, the general assembly approved the board's recom-

mendation to distribute dividends at the rate of 60 per cent to the shareholders. This translates into JD 1.8 million.

The balance sheet showed the following:

1. Current assets rose by 12.5 per cent to reach JD7,731,653. The net working capital amounted to JD4,479,486 which, being eight per cent higher than the working capital in 1997, reflects the foundation's solid financial position.
2. Shareholders' equity increased by JD210,287 due to the distribution of half a

share bonus from the reserve of "premium of shares issued" in addition to higher payables related to the purchase and installation of an archiving equipment and system for Al Ra'i library.

3. The rates of return and liquidity were higher and, as such, clearly confirmed the foundation's solid financial position.

Financial results showed the following:

Total expenditure amounted to JD8,961,888 while total earnings amounted to JD11,572,785.

ACCESS 4646868				
COMPANY				
	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE	
BANKS				
ARAB BK	200.500	207.000	+3.24%	
RTTL BK	1.270	1.320	+3.94%	
CAIRO AMMAN BK	2.490	2.370	-4.82%	
JK OF JORDAN	1.290	1.200	-4.00%	
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.940	0.960	+2.13%	
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.350	1.300	-3.70%	
THE HOUSING BK	2.730	2.640	-3.30%	
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.600	1.610	+0.63%	
JO. GULF BK	0.630	0.640	+1.59%	
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.580	1.610	+1.92%	
UNION BK	1.080	1.000	-7.39%	
JO. INVEST. & FIN. BK	1.300	1.290	-0.77%	
BEIT EL MAL	0.580	0.580	0.00%	
ARAB BANK COR.	0.510	0.540	+5.88%	
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.510	0.540	+5.88%	
BANKS INDEX	269.410		+2.20%	
INSURANCE				
JERUSALEM INS	1.370	1.340	-2.19%	
JO. FRENCH INS	2.300	2.310	+0.43%	
AMIA INS	1.050	1.050	0.00%	
INSURANCE INDEX	121.710		-0.14%	
SERVICES				
ELECTRIC POWER	1.620	1.670	+3.09%	
HOTEL & TOURISM	9.880	9.880	0.00%	
IRBID ELECTRICITY	1.970	1.840	-6.60%	
ARAB INT'L HOTELS	4.740	4.740	0.00%	
SHIPPING LINES	0.980	1.000	+2.04%	
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.350	0.350	0.00%	
JO. INT'L TRADING CENT	0.260	0.250	-3.85%	
AL-RAT	1.600	1.600	0.00%	
COMMODITIES	1.030	1.040	+0.97%	
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.940	0.980	+4.26%	
ARAB INT'L FOR INVS. & EDU	1.900	1.740	-8.42%	
UNION LAND DEV	0.980	0.950	-3.06%	
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.130	1.100	-2.65%	
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVS	1.100	1.060	-3.64%	
SERVICES INDEX	109.930		-4.54%	
INDUSTRY				
CEMENT	3.720	3.510	-5.65%	
PHOSPHATE	2.320	2.340	+0.86%	
ARAB POTASH	4.300	4.250	-1.16%	
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.700	10.800	+0.93%	
JO. TANNING	5.500	5.500	0.00%	
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICU	1.010	1.030	+1.98%	
WORSTED MILLS	2.160	2.150	-0.46%	
INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING	2.380	2.300	-3.36%	
CERAMIC IND	1.270	1.320	+3.94%	
JO. DAIRY	2.810	2.670	-4.98%	
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.200	1.240	+3.33%	
AL STEEL	0.800	0.800	0.00%	
RAFA	0.450	0.450	0.00%	
DAR AL DAWA	6.040	6.000	-0.66%	
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	1.000	0.950	-5.00%	
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.800	1.830	+1.67%	
CHLORINE	1.170	1.120	-4.27%	
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.370	0.370	0.00%	
PAPER CONVERTING	0.610	0.590	-3.28%	
NTL IND	0.330	0.320	-3.03%	
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.210	0.180	-14.29%	
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.120	1.140	+1.79%	
ROCKWOOL	0.510	0.510	0.00%	
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.490	0.490	0.00%	
SULPHUR - CHEMICALS	0.390	0.370	-5.13%	
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.210	1.250	+3.31%	
KAWTHER	0.950	0.980	+3.16%	
EL ZAY	1.180	1.150	-2.54%	
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.570	0.570	0.00%	
IND. RESOURCES	0.490	0.520	+6.12%	
NEW CAPLES	0.620	0.600	-3.23%	
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.730	0.720	-1.37%	
INDUSTRY INDEX	95.300		-1.39%	
PARALLEL				
EXPORT BK 757	0.910	0.910	0.00%	
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.470	0.470	0.00%	
JO. INT'L INS	0.970	1.000	+3.08%	
UNION INVS. CORP	0.810	0.780	-3.70%	
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.460	0.490	+6.52%	
AL - FBAL	0.770	0.780	+1.30%	
ADVANCED PHAR	0.590	0.510	-13.56%	
AL - SHARO	1.080	1.050	-2.78%	
FALCON	0.810	0.780	-3.70%	
AMMAN INS	0.390	0.370	-5.13%	
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.670	0.670	0.00%	
AL DAWLAH	0.180	0.180	0.00%	
ARAB INVESTORS	0.620	0.600	-3.23%	
ARAB INT'L TRADE	0.330	0.330	0.00%	
OPTICAL & AUDIO	0.150	0.150	0.00%	
NAMICO	0.370	0.320	-13.51%	

Lufthansa loses \$5.5m per day

BONN (AFP) — The Kosovo war is costing the German airline Lufthansa more than \$5.5 million "a day" because NATO's use of its Frankfurt hub is causing enormous flight delays and diversions, a report said.

The weekly German news magazine Der Spiegel, releasing details of a story appearing in next Monday's issue, said Lufthansa boss Juergen Weber was "incensed" at the costs, which were running at around 10 million marks (\$5.2 million euros, \$5.57 million) per day.

"Frankfurt has become a military airport," it quoted Weber as telling Lufthansa customers. The problem, the report said, lies in Frankfurt's dual use for civilian and military flights.

Dozens of U.S. tanker planes are taking off and landing from Frankfurt each day in order to refuel NATO bombers and fighters in mid-air.

The traffic is such that civilian flights to and from Frankfurt, Lufthansa's base, are being subjected to long delays and route diversions, it said.

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'Denver Broncos star quarterback retiring'

DENVER (AP) — John Elway, the comeback quarterback who led the Denver Broncos to Super Bowl victories in the last two years of a brilliant NFL career, has decided to retire after 16 seasons, the Associated Press has learned.

Sources who spoke on condition of anonymity told the AP the 38-year-old Elway has told family and friends that he won't be back for the 1999 season and had considered making an announcement this past week.

The Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post also cited unidentified sources who said Elway's retirement was imminent.

He delayed doing so first because Broncos owner Pat Bowlen was out of

town, and then because of the school shootings in suburban Littleton on Tuesday.

An official announcement is expected as early as Monday.

After winning his first Super Bowl ring in January 1998, Elway pondered whether to continue playing, delaying an announcement for four months before electing to play one more season in 1999. At the time, he said he was 99.9 per cent sure it would be his last season.

He hedged slightly after earning a second Super Bowl ring and Super Bowl MVP award last January, saying the possibility of an unprecedented third consecutive title had thrown a "kink" in his thinking.

Elway was out of town Friday and could not be reached for comment.

Broncos spokesman Jim Saccamano said he could not confirm the reports until he heard from Elway.

In his 16 seasons, Elway guided his team to more victories (148) than any other quarterback in NFL history. He threw for 51,475 yards (47,052 metres) and accounted for 54,882 total yards (50,166 total metres) — second only to Miami's Dan Marino in NFL history.

He is the only player ever to pass for 3,000 yards (2,742 metres) and rush for 200 yards (183 metres) in seven straight seasons (1985-91).

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Real target Bolic and Congo

MADRID (AFP) — Spanish giants Real Madrid are targeting strikers Edwin Amuro Congo of Colombia and Bosnian Elvir Bolic, the sports dailies As and Marca reported here on Saturday. According to As, the modest Colombian club Once Caldas is asking \$8 million for 22-year-old Congo, whose style of play Real coach John Toshack has compared to legendary Mexican striker Hugo Sanchez. While Marca reports that Real is also interested in signing 24-year-old Bolic, star of Turkish side Fenerbahce, whose contract is due to expire next year. Toshack has already warned that there could well be a clear-out after what has been a disastrous season for the Spanish giants. The deposed European Cup holders and reigning World champions are now third in the league, 10 points behind league leaders Barcelona.

Crooks net millions in fixing scandal

BONN (AFP) — Germany's biggest race-fixing scandal has netted a suspected gang of Polish crooks at least 20 million marks (\$11 million), the news magazine Focus reported Saturday. It quoted the Federation of German Bookmakers as saying that this was the loss figure for the roughly 40 betting shops in the Rhine Valley region alone. The suspected head of the ring is a 42-year-old Pole, Mytek P., now in police custody, it said. He allegedly had more than a dozen Polish accomplices, working in German stables, who gave horses a tranquiliser, Chlorpromazin, which skewed the results of "dozens" of races, Focus said.

Euro Championships stay in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (R) — The European Long-Course Swimming Championships will remain in Istanbul despite security worries arising from Turkey's conflict with Kurdish rebels. The decision to hold the championships from July 22 to August 1 in Turkey's biggest city was reached at a European Swimming League (LEN) meeting in Istanbul on Saturday. German Swimming Federation President Ruediger Tretow hinted earlier this month that because of the conflict his country might boycott the event if the venue was not changed.

Table tennis event moved from Belgrade

LONDON (R) — The World Table Tennis Championships have been moved from Belgrade to the Dutch city of Eindhoven because of NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia. Eindhoven would host individual and doubles events from August 2 to 8 but the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) had yet to decide where team competitions would take place. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said in its weekly round-up of news from sports federations. The ITTF decided last month to move the championships, which had been due to begin on Monday, away from Belgrade.

Cubs release Nomo after poor outing

CHICAGO (AFP) — Hideo Nomo's three-game tryout was not good enough for the Chicago Cubs, who Friday released the Japanese righthander.

Nomo, who signed a minor league contract with the Cubs on April 1, walked six and allowed two runs in six innings on Thursday night for Triple-A Iowa of the Pacific Coast League.

The 30-year-old Nomo was released by the New York Mets during spring training and signed with the Cubs two days after clearing waivers. His contract stated that he be released or recalled after three minor league games. He pitched three times for the Iowa Cubs and went 1-1 with a 3.71 ERA, allowing seven runs and 12 hits with 12 walks over 17 innings.

"The main thing we are looking for with a veteran pitcher like Hideo Nomo is command. He walked six guys and had trouble throwing strikes," Cubs general manager Ed Lynch said.

Lynch said the Cubs asked Nomo to extend his stay at Iowa, but the pitcher declined and elected to try to sign with another team.

"We felt at this time he would not have had success against major league hitters," Lynch said.

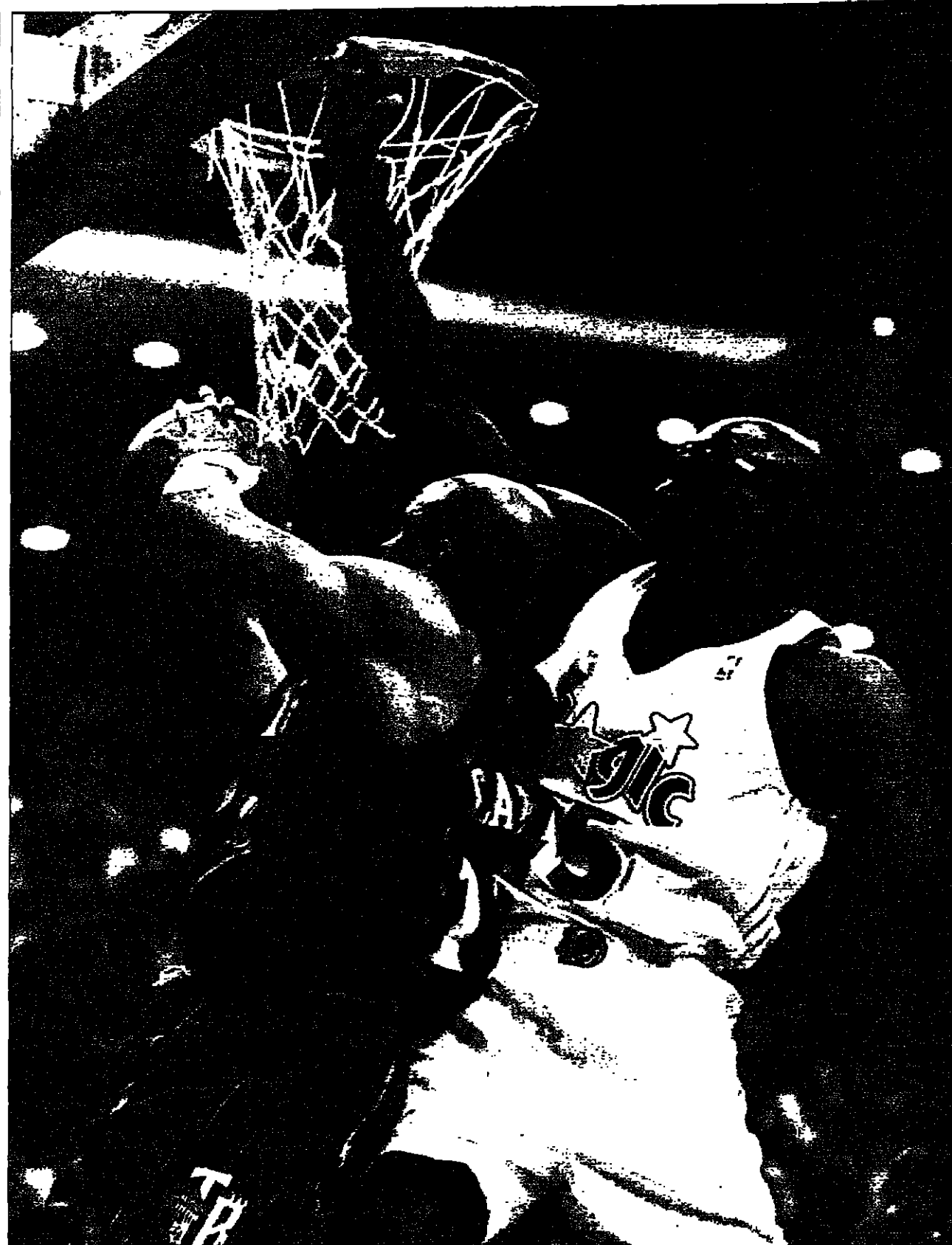
The pitching-starved Cubs decided to gamble on the 1995 National League Rookie of the Year. After winning 43 games in his first three seasons with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Nomo slipped drastically in 1998 and was traded to the Mets during the season.

Nomo went 4-5 with a 5.04 ERA in 16 games for the Mets last year. After signing a one-year deal with the Cubs, Nomo went 0-2 with a 7.62 ERA in four spring appearances, allowing 11 runs and 16 hits in 13 innings. He walked 10 and struck out 10 and had control problems throughout the exhibition season.

After starting in the Japanese League for five years, Nomo burst onto the major league scene with a bang, winning Rookie of the Year honours in 1995 after going 13-6 record with a 2.54 ERA in 28 starts for the Dodgers. He struck out 236 in 191 1/3 innings and allowed only 124 hits.

The following season, Nomo finished fourth in the Cy Young Award voting after going 16-11 with 234 strikeouts and a 3.19 ERA in 33 starts. On Sept. 17, 1996, Nomo pitched the only no-hitter in the history of hitter-friendly Coors Field, stopping the Colorado Rockies, 9-0.

In 1997, Nomo went 14-12 with a 4.25 ERA as hitters began to figure out his mysterious delivery.



Toronto Raptors forward Vince Carter (L) is fouled by Orlando Magic forward Bo Outlaw (R) during the first period of at the Arena in Orlando, FL. (AFP photo)

Jazz beat Blazers in clash of NBA's top two teams

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — The Utah Jazz avoided the fourth-quarter collapses that plagued them in their last two contests and maintained their status as the top team in the NBA with a crucial 96-85 win over the second-best Portland Trail Blazers on Friday.

Karl Malone scored nine of his 25 points in the pivotal third quarter, when the Jazz broke open a one-point game with a 16-3 burst.

All five Utah starters scored in double figures as the defending Western Conference champions avoided their first three-game losing streak since January 1997 and moved 1-1/2 games ahead of the Blazers, improving to a league-best 33-10.

After splitting their first two meetings the Jazz took the abbreviated season series with Friday's victory. If the teams should finish atop the West with identical records, Utah would receive home-court advantage throughout the playoffs.

Byron Russell scored 17 points, John Stockton chipped in 16 and seven assists, Jeff Hornacek added 13 points and Greg Ostertag had 10 points and 10 rebounds for Utah, which picked up 24 points off 18 Portland turnovers.

Jimmy Jackson led Portland with 13 points.

In Los Angeles, Maurice Taylor scored seven of his

career-high 29 points in overtime as the Clippers shocked the Houston Rockets 106-101 after blowing a 19-point lead in the final nine minutes of regulation.

Eric Piatkowski, who finished with 28 points, made four free throws in the final eight seconds to clinch the victory.

Scottie Pippen had a triple-double with 23 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists two days after his arrest for driving while intoxicated and Charles Barkley added 24 for Houston.

After the Rockets pulled ahead 89-86 on a pair of Barkley free throws, Troy Hudson's 3-pointer with eight seconds left forced overtime.

In Orlando, rookie Vince Carter scored 24 points and Dee Brown added 18 as the Toronto Raptors climbed into a tie for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot with a 95-88 victory over the fading Magic.

After Orlando pulled within two in the final minute, Carter hit a jumper with 44 seconds left and Brown sank two foul shots to build the lead to six as Toronto won for the fourth time in five games, while Orlando lost for the sixth time in seven.

In New York, Allan Houston scored a season-high 30 points and Patrick Ewing added 26 as the Knicks ended a four-game

slide with a key 110-105 victory over the Charlotte Hornets.

The Knicks moved into a tie with Toronto for the final playoff spot in the East.

Elden Campbell scored 17 points and Derrick Coleman 16 for Charlotte, which saw its nine-game winning streak stopped.

In Washington, Steve Smith scored 20 points and Mookie Blaylock added 17 and dished out 10 assists to lead the Atlanta Hawks to a 89-78 victory over the Wizards.

Atlanta moved within 1-1/2 games of Indiana in the race for the Central Division title and the second seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson collected 26 points and 17 rebounds and the Bucks held Cleveland to nine points in the fourth quarter for a 79-75 victory over the Cavaliers.

Robinson hit the go-ahead basket with 1:17 to play and Ray Allen, who finished with 16 points, sank four free throws down the stretch as Milwaukee jumped into a tie with Philadelphia for fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

In Vancouver, Don Maclean, who is averaging 7.4 points per game, erupted for 25 and Gary Payton also scored 25 to lead the Seattle SuperSonics to a much-needed 97-84 victory over the

lowly Grizzlies.

The win kept the Sonics tied with Sacramento for the final Western Conference playoff spot at 21-22.

In Sacramento, Jon Barry drained a key 3-pointer and made six of eight free throws in the final two minutes as the Kings rallied for a 105-97 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Rookie Jason Williams scored a season-high 27 points and Barry netted a season-best 20 to help the kings overcome a 19-point deficit and post their fourth straight win to retain a share of the final playoff spot in the West.

In Denver, Antonio McDyess scored 25 points and Chauncey Billups added 20 to lead the Nuggets to a 96-84 victory over the golden state warriors in the first professional sporting event in Denver since the murder of 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in nearby Littleton, Colorado.

The Nuggets wore black armbands to honour the victims of the tragedy and held a moment of silence before the game.

The Nuggets, baseball's Rockies and the NHL Avalanche had all postponed their home games since Tuesday's shootings.

In Chicago, the Boston Celtics jumped out to an early 18-4 lead and never looked back in a 100-71 rout of the hapless Bulls.

Brett Steven retires from tennis

WELLINGTON (AP) — New Zealand's top-ranked men's tennis player Brett Steven announced Saturday his retirement after 12 years on the pro circuit.

Steven, 29, said a recurring foot injury, a subsequent slide in his singles ranking and the desire to spend more time with his family contributed to his decision to quit earlier than planned.

"I have made no secret that this was probably going to be my last year on the ATP tour," Steven said Saturday.

"I am still planning to play the Davis Cup tie against Spain at the end of September but will retire completely from competitive tennis after that."

Steven, from Auckland, tore a tendon in his right foot in February and has struggled with the injury since. He has been advised it could take up to two months to heal properly.

Steven, with a current association of touring professionals (ATP) Tour singles ranking of 126 and 54 in doubles, said he had no regrets about retiring.

"I would have liked to have won a singles title after get-

ting so close three times but that just wasn't to be," he said.

"I've had some good results and always given my best. You can't do more than that."

Steven reached three career finals — in Newport, Rhode Island in 1997, Auckland 1996 and Schenectady, New York in 1993 — but was the beaten finalist each time.

He rates his win over Pete Sampras in the 1993 Canadian open, three weeks after Sampras has won his first Wimbledon title to attain the No. 1 World ranking, as one of his career highlights.

Steven won nine career doubles titles.

A regular Davis Cup member since 1989 during which time he played 20 matches for New Zealand, Steven had a career-high singles ranking of 32 and doubles ranking of 16.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre

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PHILADELPHIA '1'
Steven Spielberg's
ANTZ
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15
SAVING PRIVATE RYAN
Show: 9:30

CINEMA TEL:463-4144
PHILADELPHIA '2'
Sophie Marceau ...
in Leo Tolstoy's
ANNA KARENINA
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5699238
PLAZA
Antonio Banderas... in
THE MASK OF ZORRO
Shows: 12:30, 3:30
Bruce Willis ... in
ARMAGEDDON
Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5677420
CONCORDE
ALWAD MAHROUS
BTA' AL WAZIR
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORDE 2
DISCLOSURE

CINEMA TEL:5934793
GALLERIA 1
ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria
Will Smith & Gene Hackman...in
ENEMY OF THE STATE
Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL:5934793
GALLERIA 2
ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria
Dennis Quaid
& Natasha Richardson...in
THE PARENT TRAP
Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

Hisham Yanes Theatre
TEL: 4625155

The political satire
AL SALAM AL
Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

هكذا منذ ان كان

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Olympic team prepares for qualifiers

AMMAN — The national Olympic football team will leave for Oman and then to the UAE to hold friendlies against its counterparts as part of preparations for the Sydney Olympics Asian group qualifiers, which will be held in Amman in July. Jordan has already played two matches against Lebanon drawing 1-1 and 0-0 and losing 4-1 to Iraq. The team will now play two matches against the Syrian team. The Iraqi and Saudi Arabian teams, which are competing against the Olympic team for the qualifying berth to the second round, have prepared a serious training programme. The Iraqi team held four matches in Vietnam, before heading to Thailand and China. They will then head back for Baghdad to holding friendlies against the Jordanian and Russian counterparts before hold a training camp in Argentina. Meanwhile, in response to the directives of HRH Prince Ali, president of the Jordan Football Association, a technical committee has started working on the restructuring of both the national and Olympic teams aiming at merging them in one team after reducing the number of players. Trainers of the new 35-player team, which will include veteran athletes from the national team and juniors from the Olympic team, will be redistributed. The plan, to be launched after the national team's return from Iraq, will include training camps and friendlies, aiming at selecting players for the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament.



Spaniard Carlos Moya rests with a towel over his head during his Monte Carlo Open quarterfinal match against French Jérôme Golmard. Golmard won 6-7, 6-3, 6-0 (AFP photo)

Monte Carlo semis delayed by rain

MONTE CARLO (R) — Rain delayed the start of the semifinals at the Monte Carlo Open tennis tournament on Saturday. Twenty minutes after the scheduled start of the first semifinal between Brazil's Gustavo Kuerten and Spain's Felix Mantilla, the centre court was still covered and the weather forecast was not optimistic.

Fed Cup Germany and Japan split 1-1

HAMBURG (AP) — Japan's Shinobu Asagoe, a last-minute replacement for the injured Ai Sugiyama, won Saturday to give Japan a 1-1 split on the opening day of a Fed Cup tie. Asagoe, playing her first fed cup match, beat Elena Wagner, 7-6 (8-6), 6-1 to even up the world Group 2 tie in which the top stars from both countries have been forced out by injury. Andrea Glass beat Miho Saeki 6-3, 6-4 in the first singles of a tie which will determine which of the two countries qualifies again for World Group I. The top Germans, Steffi Graf and Anke Huber, had been injured last week. Sugiyama twisted her ankle less than an hour before play began Saturday. The little-known Asagoe, ranked 130th in the world, erased Wagner's 6-5 lead in the first set then went on to win easily against the Bulgarian-born German. "I've never even seen her play before — I didn't know what to expect," said Wagner, who flew in from a tournament in Bulgaria two days ago to help the short-handed Germans. Glass, who gained a key break at 4-4 in the second set, needed one hour 22 minutes to close out her match against Saeki when a backhand by the Japanese player sailed wide. Sunday, glass faces Asagoe and Wagner plays Saeki in the reserve singles. The doubles will be played later in the day. "I think the chances are now 50-50," said Japan captain Takeshi Koura of the tie in which the role of favourite keeps switching as the injuries mount.



The players of the Sri Lankan cricket team say prayers Monday in Colombo shortly before leaving for England to defend their cricket World Cup. From left are (front row): Chandika Hathurusinghe, Roshan Mahanama, Sanath Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardena and Muttiah Muralidharan (AFP photo)

American League

Cleveland	7	Boston	6
Baltimore	7	Oakland	4
Tampa Bay	5	Seattle	4
Chicago	5	Detroit	0
New York	6	Toronto	4
Texas	4	Minnesota	2
Anaheim	4	Kansas City	2

National League

New York	6	Chicago	5
Philadelphia	6	Montreal	2
Florida	9	Atlanta	1
Milwaukee	9	Pittsburgh	1
Cincinnati	7	Houston	5
Arizona	10	San Diego	6
St. Louis	12	Los Angeles	5
San Francisco	7	Colorado	2

NBA

Atlanta	89	Washington	78
New York	110	Charlotte	105
Toronto	95	Orlando	88
Boston	100	Chicago	71
Milwaukee	79	Cleveland	75
Denver	96	Golden State	84
LA Clippers	106	Houston	101 (OT)
Sacramento	105	Minnesota	97
Utah	96	Portland	85
Seattle	97	Vancouver	84

Portuguese League

Vitoria Setubal	3	Sporting Braga	0
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Dutch League

De Graafschap	1	Eindhoven	0
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German League

VfB Stuttgart	0	B. Leverkusen	1
B. Dortmund	2	Werder Bremen	1

Courier upset in Florida

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Florida (AP) — Qualifier Max Mirnyi of Belarus upset No. 5 seed and defending champion Jim Courier 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-4 in the Era Real Estate Clay Court Championship quarterfinals. Mirnyi used an aggressive, attacking play and a dominating serve throughout the two-hour match Friday. Mirnyi, 21, had 10 aces and did not have his serve broken. Ranked No. 228 entering the tournament, Mirnyi now has a six-match winning streak and advances to his first ATP tour semifinal. He defeated third-seeded Scott Draper in the first round. "Some days things go for you, and some times they don't," said Courier, who lives in nearby Orlando. It was his first loss in eight matches at Disney's wide world of sports complex. "All I could do today was fight. I didn't get too many balls today. He blew a lot of serves by me," Courier said. "There weren't a lot of ground strokes. It was more of a survival match." In other quarterfinal play, eighth-seeded Magnus Norman of Sweden beat Gabriel Trifu of Romania 7-5, 6-2; No. 7 Christian Ruud defeated Hernan Gummy of Argentina 7-6 (12-10), 6-4; and Guillermo Canas of Argentina beat Alberto Martin of Spain 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Wells loses in return to Yankee Stadium

NEW YORK (R) — David Wells received a warm welcome from New York fans on Friday, but the popular pitcher's return to Yankee Stadium was spoiled by the team he helped win the world series last year. Orlando Hernandez pitched effectively into the eighth inning and Chili Davis drove in three runs and scored twice to give the Yankees a 6-4 win over the Toronto Blue Jays and hand Wells his first loss of the season. It was only the eighth loss in 35 career decisions at Yankee Stadium for Wells (3-1), who pitched a perfect game there last year and was one of the Yanks' postseason heroes. Devastated by the pre-season trade that sent him back to Toronto, Wells was appreciative of the reception he received from the crowd. "It was flattering. I was all choked up. I hope they continue to cheer me every time I come back," he said. "I miss everything about New York," Wells admitted. "The guys over there, the city, David Letterman, Howard Stern..." "But I have no hard feelings about what happened. I don't hold a grudge against the Yankees or (owner) George Steinbrenner. They gave me the two best years of my career." Wells was strong early but he walked Paul O'Neill and Bernie Williams to open the seventh and both scored when Davis, who was 3-for-4, doubled to right for a 3-1 lead. Tino Martinez's RBI single made it 4-1 and the Yankees added a pair of insurance runs in the eighth. Hernandez (3-1) gave up just two runs and seven hits with three walks and nine strikeouts. He retired the first 11 batters and did not allow a hit until Tony Fernandez singled to lead off the fifth. In Baltimore, Mike Bordick snapped a 3-3 tie with an RBI single in the bottom of the seventh and Jeff Conine added a three-run double as the Orioles halted a six-game losing streak with a 7-4 victory over the Oakland Athletics. The underachieving Orioles, who own the worst record in the majors at 4-12, overcame Oakland solo homers by John Jaha, Matt Stairs and Tony Phillips. In Boston, Wil Cordero hit a two-run homer against his former team in the sixth inning to lift the Cleveland Indians to a 7-6 victory over the Red Sox in a game marred by two bench-clearing brawls. Kenny Lofton and Travis Fryman also homered for Cleveland, which needed Cordero's blast after the Red Sox pushed across five runs in the fifth to grab a 6-5 lead. The Indians (12-3) are off to their best start since beginning 1988 with a 14-3 mark. At Tampa Bay, Randy Winn's solo homer in the eighth inning gave the Devil Rays a 5-4 victory over the Seattle Mariners and a franchise-record sixth straight win. David Segui had staked the Mariners to a 4-0 lead with a three-run shot in the second off Tampa Bay starter Bobby Witt. The Devils Rays scored two runs in the third and two more in the seventh each time on an RBI single by Wade Boggs and a sacrifice fly by John Flaherty. In Chicago, Mike Siroka threw a five-hitter for his first career shutout and Magglio Ordonez capped a four-run third inning with a two-run homer as the White Sox blanked the Detroit Tigers 5-0. Siroka (1-2) struck out three and walked just one as the white Sox posted their fifth straight win. At Minnesota, Juan Gonzalez hit his first homer of the season and Mark Clark pitched 6-2/3 strong innings to earn his first victory as the Texas Rangers beat the Twins 4-2. Gonzalez, who had gone 64 at-bats without a homer for his longest career drought at the start of a season, belted a three-run shot off rookie mike Lincoln in the sixth inning to give Clark all the support he needed. Clark (1-2) gave up two runs and four hits with a pair of walks and six strikeouts. In Kansas City, the Anaheim Angels rallied for three runs off closer Jeff Montgomery with two outs in the top of the ninth inning to pull out a 4-2 victory over the Royals and halt a five-game losing streak. Montgomery (0-2) suffered his second blown save in three chances.

Leverkusen close gap at the top

BONN (AFP) — On-song Bayer Leverkusen closed the gap at the top of the German Bundesliga to seven points on Friday with an Ulf Kirsten goal securing a 1-0 win at Stuttgart, while Borussia Dortmund pressed their UEFA Cup claims with a home win over Bremen. Leverkusen made almost certain of a Champions League slot as they moved onto 57 points from 28 games, still well adrift of leaders Bayern Munich but a comfortable nine points ahead of outgoing champions Kaiserslautern, who host Freiburg on Saturday. Dortmund, meanwhile, had to come from behind to see off Bremen as they leapfrogged Hertha Berlin and VfL Wolfsburg into fourth spot.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TALENTED BRIDGE
CHAMPION

WHEN WILL THEY EVER LEARN?

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ 54</p> <p>♥ 986</p> <p>♦ A K 6 4 3 2</p> <p>♣ J 8</p>	<p>EAST</p> <p>♠ Q 9 7</p> <p>♥ Q 1 7 4 2</p> <p>♦ Q 7</p> <p>♣ K 10 4</p>
--	---

WEST

♠ J 10 3 2

♥ A K 4 6

♦ A K 10 5 3

♣ Q 8

SOUTH

♠ A K 4 6

♥ A K 10 5 3

♦ Q 8

♣ A 2

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
30 Pass 30 Pass
4C Pass 4C Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♠

Some players are born unbelievers. Despite paying premiums to Tampa Bay over the years, there were still members of the club who doubted with a trump stack, ignoring the fact that a bad trump division transformed him from a card-pusher into a master technician.

Here is the latest episode. The only mouse for East's double was that Tommy was known to be a bad play-

er. Any time Tommy held more than half the aces and kings in the deck he considered a double as a personal affront, and the redouble was almost automatic.

Considering the initial prompt, North produced a superb dummy. Obviously, here was a member who knew that, to play with Tommy as a partner, you needed to be "super-sound" in the auction. Declarer won the first trick with the ace of clubs, cashed the ace and king of spades, then pulled a spade with dummy's aid. The ace of hearts was run and, when East failed to cover, the eight of hearts followed, covered by the jack and won with the king in the closed hand.

Tommy's technique was impeccable. He cashed the queen of diamonds, crossed to the king and led the ace. East ruffed with the seven and, rather than overruff, declarer discarded the losing club. East continued with a club, ruffed in the closed hand. Now Tommy exited with his remaining spade, won by West. But Tommy remained with the A 10 of hearts over East's Q 4. The score for making four hearts redoubled with an overtrick came to 1080 (including 300 points for a non-vulnerable game) — more than North South would have collected for bidding and making six diamonds.

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Sun. 25/4/99	Salah Saloon	05:00 p.m.	Zarqa Tel: 05/3902024
Mon. 26/4/99	Flix Centre	11:00 a.m.	Airport Way, Beside Safeway Tel. 5811240
Tue. 27/4/99	Robina Centre	05:00 p.m.	Abdoun Tel.: 5923163

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4. Employment would be based upon an annual contract, renewable with the consent of both parties.

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Egypt, Arab League slam Israeli premier over Orient House closure

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt and the Arab League on Saturday branded a decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to shut the unofficial PLO headquarters in Jerusalem as "defiance" and a "dangerous" electoral ploy.

"The decision to close offices in Orient House is a new defiance of the peace process and international legislation," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters here.

"Israel must respect the agreements it has signed which indicate that Jerusalem is to be negotiated," he said.

"Any unilateral action taken by Israel concerning Arab east Jerusalem, Orient House or [Jewish] settlements... to change the demographic, geographic or legal status of Jerusalem is illegal," Musa said.

Assistant Arab League secretary general for Palestinian affairs, Said Kamal, echoed the remarks, warning of the "dangerous" repercussions to regional security and stability.

"The Israeli decision is nothing but an electoral card in the hands of Netanyahu who is trying to use it to outbid his rivals during the Israeli elections" slated for May 17, Kamal told reporters.

"This decision is a flagrant violation of agreements concluded between Palestinians and Israelis," Kamal added.

On Thursday, Netanyahu ordered the closure of Orient House, the unofficial headquarters of Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Arab east Jerusalem, in response to a meeting there Wednesday between

Palestinian officials and Arab diplomats.

The Israeli premier said the meeting violated agreements barring Palestinian National Authority (PNA) activity in Jerusalem.

Kamal urged the United States, Russia and the European Union to put pressure on Israel to reverse the decision.

Palestinian officials have also denounced the move as a campaign ploy and said any attempt to close down part of Orient House, technically a private residence, would be illegal.

Israel boosted the police presence in occupied east Jerusalem on Friday amid fears the decision to close PLO offices at Orient House could trigger Palestinian violence.

Netanyahu, who is lagging in opinion polls behind his

main rival for the premiership, Labour Party chief Ehud Barak, has tried to make an alleged Palestinian threat to Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem a central theme of his reelection campaign.

Under the 1993 Oslo peace accords, the PNA is authorised to operate only in agreed parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The political status of Arab east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967 and later illegally annexed as part of its capital, was to be resolved in future negotiations.

Israel insists that Arab east Jerusalem is part of its "undivided eternal capital," a declaration not recognised by the international community, while the Palestinians hope to make the sector the capital of a state of their own.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rabid dogs attack Egyptian villagers

CAIRO (AFP) — Rabid dogs went on the rampage in a northern Egyptian village, attacking and injuring 17 people, most of them children, the government daily Al Jumhuriya reported on Saturday. A pack of the rabid animals raced out of the village cemetery in Arab Al Ayayda, north of Cairo, and savaged 15 children and two adults on Friday, the paper said. Villagers tried to beat the dogs away with sticks and knives but could not prevent the beasts from attacking. Police shot dead two of the animals but several others got away. All 17 people were hospitalised.

Iraq accuses U.S. of fuel dumping

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused U.S. and British planes on Saturday of dumping fuel on agricultural land in the south of the country, causing the death of several people. The charges were detailed in messages from Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and current Security Council President Alain Le Roy, the Iraqi press reported. Sahhaf said the U.S. and British planes dumped the fuel during patrol flights over the southern "no-fly" zone, "causing the death of a number of innocent citizens." "This aggression against innocent citizens is the continuation of the military aggression perpetrated by the United States and Britain against Iraq and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law," Sahhaf said.

Ocalan trial to open late May: report

ISTANBUL (AFP) — The trial of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan will open late next month after reconstruction of a special court on the prison island where he is being held is completed, the Turkish daily reported Saturday. The Ankara State Security is to set an opening date for the trial of the leader of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) at a hearing in Ankara next Friday. Turkey quoted unnamed officials as saying the date would probably be fixed for late May. The prosecution this week announced it had completed the indictment, clearing the way for the trial to go ahead.

Palestinians rally for release of militants

JERICHO (AFP) — Some 100 Palestinians held a rally outside the central prison in the West Bank city of Jericho on Saturday to demand the release of two militants from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The demonstrators held a peaceful protest to call for the immediate release of cousins Yusef and Shaher Razi, sentenced to seven and a half years in the Palestinian prison in 1995 on charges of inciting unrest. Israel suspects the pair of involvement in the June 1995 stabbing death of two Israelis near Jericho and at the time vigorously protested their sentencing, which allowed them to avoid extradition to the Jewish state. They would have faced life imprisonment in Israel if found guilty of the murders.

Israeli warplanes attack south Lebanon

NABATIYEH (R) — Israeli warplanes attacked suspected Hizbollah positions in south Lebanon on Saturday, officials said. Witnesses and a security source said Israeli planes fired about eight rockets on Iqlim Al Tuffah, just north of the 15-km deep zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon. Another security source said Israeli jets also hit areas bordering Jezzine, an enclave officially outside the zone but controlled by the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army (SLA). An Israeli army statement released in Jerusalem confirmed the raids, saying its planes attacked "terrorist targets" north of the zone. There were no immediate reports of casualties in the attacks which raised to 46 the number of Israeli raids on Lebanon since the start of the year. The raids came after a Hizbollah roadside bomb wounded an SLA officer and killed his driver in south Lebanon on Friday. Pro-Israeli Hizbollah and other groups are waging a war of attrition to oust Israeli troops and their SLA allies from the occupation zone.

Armenians rally to mark genocide

TEHRAN (AFP) — Several thousand Armenians demonstrated outside U.N. offices in Tehran on Saturday to mark the anniversary of the slaughter of 1.5 million ethnic Armenians under Turkish rule. Demonstrators chanted "Death to the fascist government of Turkey," "Death to the United States," and hostile slogans against Israel during the rally. Similar protests were held in Istanbul and the northwest city of Orumiye, home to a large Armenian community, to mark the anniversary of the Armenian genocide. An estimated 1.5 million Armenians perished at the hands of the Turks between 1894 and 1923. The genocide is traditionally commemorated on April 24, the date in 1915 when around 200 Armenian intellectuals and political leaders were arrested in present-day Istanbul.

Iraq accuses U.N. of misusing money

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq suspects a U.N. committee is awarding Iraqi money collected as compensation for Gulf War damage to "imaginary parties" and has demanded details on where the money is going. The demand, reported Saturday by the official Iraqi News Agency, was made in a statement delivered to the Geneva-based Compensation Committee by Iraq's permanent representative in Geneva. Baghdad wants "names of governments which have received compensation and failed to forward them to those who filed for compensation," the agency said.

Ecevit in Cyprus to launch fresh talks — diplomats

NICOSIA (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit arrived in northern Cyprus on Saturday in what diplomats said was a bid to get negotiations on the divided island back on track before the formation of a new government in Ankara.

Ecevit, who told reporters he was in northern Cyprus for a private holiday, met with Rauf Denktaş, leader of the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), soon after arriving in Nicosia.

The visit came as a surprise even to TRNC officials, who were informed of it as Ecevit was already in flight, while media reports in Turkey said his regular schedule for the weekend had been cancelled at short notice.

"I came for a rest," Ecevit told reporters. "I don't want to see anybody for a couple of days. I need to think thoroughly."

But Ecevit was accompanied by Sukru Sina Gurel, the Turkish state minister in charge of ties with the TRNC, and he went straight to the Turkish embassy before meeting Denktaş.

Denktaş said Ecevit had come to "enlighten us about the Cyprus problem" while the prime minister said that while it might seem Cyprus

was on the backburner due to the Kosovo crisis, "we still have to be alert."

Ecevit said he would meet Denktaş again during his stay "if it is necessary."

Diplomats in northern Cyprus said the visit was the result of U.S. pressure on Turkish President Suleyman Demirel during his trip to Washington for the NATO summit.

They said a fresh initiative for a solution to the island's 25-year division would be made more difficult if the ultra-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP) is included in the new government to be formed in Ankara next month, as seems likely.

The aim of Ecevit's visit was to create a fait accompli as the MHP favours a hard-line approach to the Cyprus issue, the diplomats said.

The MHP took 18 per cent of the vote in last week's elections in Turkey, making it the second largest party in parliament and a strong contender to join a coalition government.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkey occupied its northern third in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece. Denktaş proclaimed the TRNC in 1983 but it is recognised only by Ankara.

Iran's cultural thaw irreversible, embattled minister says

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's minister of culture, threatened with impeachment by hardline rivals, said on Saturday the liberal policies he and President Mohammad Khatami had set in motion would prove irreversible even if he were hounded from office.

Attallah Mohajerani, poised and confident despite months of personal attacks by the conservative-led parliament that culminates in a no-confidence vote on May 1, also vowed his critics would pay a heavy political price for his ousting.

"The time for banning publication of opposition views has passed," Mohajerani, pointman in the president's cultural thaw, told a news conference. "The chick cannot be put back into the egg."

He said conservatives would not stop at his removal from office, but were seeking to reverse altogether Khatami's social and political liberalisation, a tactic that could only backfire.

"I believe members of parliament have made a mistake in their calculations. If [the impeachment] succeeds it will not be in the interest of parliament. The [conservative] majority will become much weaker if they succeed in removing me."

Thirty-one conservative MPs submitted a petition on April 21 to demand Mohajerani's removal from office "for failing to uphold Islamic and revolutionary values [and] insulting religious sanctities."



A TRIP TO THE MAILBOX: A diver prepares to drop a waterproof postcard into an antique mailbox, which is set up under the sea in Susami, south of Wakayama, western Japan. Frogmen will collect the cards daily and take them to the local post office. This is a part of the town's marine sports festival, which continues until the end of September (AP photo)

Sanctions still take heavy toll among Iraqis — official

BAGHDAD (R) — United Nations sanctions are still hurting Iraqis, especially children, despite Baghdad's "oil-for-food" deal with the United Nations, a senior international humanitarian official said on Saturday.

Asrid Heiberg, president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, said a high percentage of Iraqis were not getting enough to eat and had no access to proper health care.

Since sanctions were imposed in response to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, infant mortality has tripled and the death rate of children under five is at least six times higher. "The effects of sanctions are still evident in large sectors of the population. Food shortages, the severe deterioration

of health care services and lack of access to clean water and sanitary installations are taking a heavy toll," Heiberg told a news conference.

"It is not acceptable that 25 per cent of Iraqi children are malnourished and that so many newborn babies are underweight," she said.

Heiberg, who arrived in Iraq four days ago, toured several hospitals in Baghdad and other cities and met with Iraqi officials including Health Minister Umeed Madhat Mubarak. Mubarak said last week that more than one million Iraqi children had died since the imposition of the U.N. sanctions nearly nine years ago.

Food and medicine imports are allowed under the oil-for-food pact but Heiberg said the

amount reaching the country was not enough, especially for Iraq's children.

"The oil deal allows Iraq to sell \$5.26 billion worth of oil over six months to buy relief needs for the Iraqi people. But low oil prices and a well-wrecked oil industry enable Iraq to sell only up to \$3.5 billion worth of oil."

Heiberg said that she would ask donor societies for urgent funding to support a relief programme which was being launched by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in Iraq. "Funding must be found urgently to continue the federation's supplementary feeding programmes for the malnourished as well as the distribution of essential medicines," she said.



Italians leave wives for not being like mom

ROME (AFP) — One in five Italian men leave their wives because they are not enough like their own mothers and some even want their ex to go bald, according to a survey published Saturday in the Italian edition of the magazine *Burda*. On the other hand, almost a quarter of divorced women complained of the dullness of their ex-husbands. The survey showed that 21 per cent of Italian men filing for divorce cited as the main reason the fact that their wives were not like their "mamma." Another 15 per cent cited "betrayal" as the grounds for the split. Among women, 23 per cent said they left their husband because he was "boring."

Red card for club's mascot

LONDON (R) — Cyril the Swan, a 2.74-metre tall mascot employed by Swansea City Soccer Club, has been banned from the touchline and his club fined 1,000 pounds (\$1,600). The Welsh Football Association decided Cyril should not have gone on to the pitch to join players celebrating a Swansea goal in a match against Millwall last November. Cyril has been banned until the soccer authorities produce a code of conduct for mascots. Last year a big bad wolf traded blows with three little pigs at a match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Bristol City. In another game Bolton Wanderers' mascot Lofly the Lion had meat pies thrown at him.

007 thwarts British secret service

LONDON (R) — James Bond has outgunned his own British secret service. The showdown reportedly erupted when makers of the latest thriller about the world's most famous spy were thwarted in a bid to film river chase scenes in front of the London headquarters of MI6. Ans Minister Janet Anderson stepped in and got Foreign Secretary Robin Cook to give the producers of "The World Is Not Enough" a licence to film. "After all Bond has done for Britain, it was the least we could do for Bond," a government official said. So Pierce Brosnan, playing secret agent 007, was given the go-ahead for a spectacular chase up the River Thames, past MI6 headquarters — which is blown up later in the film.

Missing bird adds element of danger

LONDON (R) — U.S. air crews flying bombing missions to Yugoslavia face a new danger after a feathered ally disappeared from a base in western England. Cassie, a Peregrine falcon, kept the Fairford base clear of pigeons, crows and seagulls that could have been sucked into the engines of B-1 and B-52 bombers thundering down the runway. But the sleek bird of prey has not been seen for a week and her owner thinks she may have been abducted. "She was leashed to her block by a lead," said Ray Salter. "I suspect that someone stole her or let her go deliberately."

No hemp for heat

LONDON (R) — Irish homes and businesses are unlikely to be powered by cannabis despite four years of encouraging research that shows the plant has real potential as a fuel crop, scientists said. Cannabis sativa, or hemp, does not work economically as a biomass crop at the moment in Ireland, said Bernard Rice of the government's Teagasc Agricultural Research Agency. Fears that burning the hemp might produce a narcotic effect are unfounded, say experts, as hemp contains hardly any of the drug delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). "You would have to smoke a joint the size of a telegraph pole to experience any effects," said John Lowe of hemp processing company Hemcore.

Palestinian territories face constitutional limbo

By Khalil Abed Rabbo
Agence France Presse

RAMALLAH — The Palestinian territories will face a constitutional vacuum when the five-year autonomy period agreed upon by Israel and the PLO expires May 4 without a permanent accord to replace it, legal analysts say.

At issue is the status of those bodies set up by the interim Oslo accords, such as the Palestinian Legislative Council, whose status will fall into limbo when the mandate of the deputies and of the president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) expires.

Palestinian experts argue that only the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)

has the right under international law to fill the resulting vacuum because it enjoys widespread international recognition, not least from Israel, as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

"After May 4 we will face a fearsome legal and constitutional vacuum because the Palestinian legislature and other institutions will end their terms as set out under the Oslo agreements," prominent lawyer Ali Al Safarini told AFP.

"Palestinian leaders face a difficult choice. Should they announce a state or should they delay until another, more suitable time as most governments have advised?" said Safarini.

The PNA currently exercises total control over only 10 per cent of the West

Bank and some 60 per cent of Gaza.

It has partial control over another 17 per cent of the West Bank while Israel retains the remaining parts of the Palestinian territories which it occupied in 1967.

But this has not stopped Arafat from threatening to declare a state when the interim agreements come to an end.

Israel's rightist government has warned it will take "extreme measures" in response to a statehood declaration by Arafat, possibly including the annexation of the parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip still under its control.

Safarini argues that Israel's recognition of the PLO means that only the PLO can take over in the Palestinian territories

when the interim agreements expire.

He points to letters of mutual recognition exchanged between former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat when the Declaration of Principles was signed in Oslo in 1993.

In the letters, the PLO recognised the right of Israel to exist while Israel recognised the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people but did not accept the Palestinian right to statehood.

"The PLO will become the sole authority in the Palestinian territories after May 4. Only the PLO, through its central council, will be able to legislate and to transfer its authority to an elected legislature," Safarini said.

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